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HALF HOURS

WITH THE LESSONS OF 1884

CHAPTERS ON THE BIBLE TEXTS CHOSEN FOR
SABBATH-SCHOOL STUDY DURING 1884

IN CONNECTION WITH

THE INTERNATIONAL LESSON SERIES

BY

TWENTY-FOUR PRESBYTERIAN CLERGYMEN

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PHILADELPHIA

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P R E F A C E.

A YEAR ago the Presbyterian Board of Publication offered to the great army of Bible-students engaged in the study of God's word in connection with our Sabbath-school system a volume entitled *Half Hours with the Lessons of 1883*. It contained forty-eight brief discourses, by eminent clergymen—one on the theme of each lesson for the year. It was received so heartily that the Board now publishes a similar volume on the Bible-lessons for 1884. The rapid sale of the *Half Hours with the Lessons* for the last year proves that there is a large body of teachers and officers—perhaps we may add of scholars also—earnestly desirous of the best aids that can be obtained for the full understanding of the Scriptures studied, and, beyond this, of stimulus to mind and soul for its spiritual apprehension and application. The thoughts of men eminent for godly wisdom and for power in exposition and application, in such a book as this, are sought for and used with eagerness. May this second volume of *Half Hours with the Lessons* be abundantly blessed to teachers and to taught!

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FIRST QUARTER.

THE CONFERENCE AT JERUSALEM.

BY THE REV. JOHN HALL, D.D.

Jan. 6.—Acts 15: 1-11.

WITHOUT giving the subject full or exact thought, some adduce the divergences of view regarding portions of the Christian faith as a presumption against it. They do not allow for various circumstances that modify men's views and conclusions. A picture does not make the same exact impression on all beholders. A landscape is dull to one, attractive to another. Divine truth, like human or divine works, is in like manner differently regarded by men. In some cases preconceived notions influence the judgment. In some instances hereditary feelings or tender associations are, or seem to be, rudely assailed by it. In some cases the apprehension of it is one-sided and imperfect, and that which is pronounced upon is only a part of the divine revelation. While men have varieties of mental temperament, training and feeling, we may expect varieties of view regarding portions of the Christian system, and the assertion of such differing views now no more justifies doubt or wavering than did the discussions of the first century and among the first generation of believers.

All things considered, it was a very natural thing for devout Jews to cling to the ritual which God had undoubtedly given to their fathers, and which was linked with all spiritual work in the history of the nation. To maintain the Psalms of David as the matter of praise; to view with alarm departures from ancient usages in things sacred; to cling to language and forms the cause for which has vanished; to hold by the old version of the New Testament even where the weight of authority is in favor of the readings of the Revision,—these and many such experiences among good people enable us to comprehend how naturally the men who came down from Judea taught the brethren, “except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses”—that is, in the end, unless ye stand by the whole system given through Moses—“ye cannot be saved.” Residents in Judea, and especially about Jerusalem, with all their associations unaffected as they would be by residence, say, in Antioch or Alexandria, by intercourse with Gentiles, were all along slow to adopt the wider basis of the Christian dispensation.

How far these men were honest, or how far they are to be counted among the “false brethren” of Gal. 4:4 is not certain. They were carrying out probably a concerted plan. Antioch was the centre of the Christian movement among the Gentiles, and it was important that this grave question should have a definite settlement—if possible, in their way. It is a presumption against them that they seem more concerned to have their peculiarities enforced than to have Gentiles enlightened and saved. To have yielded to their demand would have been to continue all the old Jewish pride and exclusiveness, or it would have been to make Jews of all believers among the Gentiles.

It will not do to buy peace at any price; it may be bought too dearly. After much discussion, Paul and

Barnabas resisting their pleas, the brethren, not desiring to be judges in their own case, resolved to seek a decision of the point from the mother-church at Jerusalem, (see v. 33), and appointed deputies (v. 2), including Paul and Barnabas—who might have claimed the right to issue the point—to go to the apostles and elders about this question. It is to be noticed that it is not a secret council that is held; that no pope or primate pronounces on the question raised; that the brethren take responsibility and exercise authority in this matter, so early does the spirit of self-government develop itself in the Church. This does not conflict with Paul's "by revelation," for God reveals to his people what "he would have them do."

The Church brought them on their way, cared for the expense of the journey on her business, or, as some understand it, attended them in procession in setting out; and they, as they journeyed, advanced the interests of the truth, lingering with the infant churches through Phoenicia and Samaria, and telling them of the conversion of the Gentiles. Returned missionaries have sometimes made the deepest impressions by such addresses, not on believers only, but upon unbelievers. Great joy among the brethren was thus produced. How can believers be otherwise than glad when they hear of the victories of their Master's grace?

As was to be expected, the deputation was cordially and fittingly received in Jerusalem. Paul had met Peter and James before: now (we infer from Gal. 2: 2) he and Barnabas confer with the leaders there, so that they might understand the magnitude of the interests in hand and arrange for wise settlement. There is a certain wisdom to be used in the doing of the Lord's work which is not to be confounded with cunning or with worldly policy. (See Gal. 2: 1-6 on this matter.)

When the public report was made, when they were "received of the Church, the apostles and elders"—mark again the parties and the order, and see 23, 25—certain of the Pharisees, who as a sect were wedded to the law, acting probably in concert with the emissaries who had moved in the matter at Antioch, yet professing faith in Jesus—hence said to "believe"—renewed the question, only in a stronger form, saying, "It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses." (See 13 : 39, and compare v. 4.) It is the ceremonial law they have in mind: about the moral there was no dispute. They did not consider the silence of the Master on this point, nor the just deductions from the gift of the Spirit to the Gentiles irrespective of any conformity to the Jewish ritual. (See v. 8.)

A special meeting was held (v. 6), with the usual free discussion—"much disputing" as to mode of proceeding possibly, rights of members and the merits of the case, which itself needed to be defined with some exactness. Laws, precedents and former rulings could not be adduced; they were being made for the future. It is not wrong to have free discussion if only the eye be single and the temper Christian. Free speech is, in some sense, a fruit of the gospel, and it is essential to free development of any good cause.

Peter made a formal speech, very important and fitting in this matter from his connection with the question at issue. Romanists argue for his primacy from his being the first speaker, though he is only the first *reported* speaker, and the friends of diocesan episcopacy claim for James such local place and power from his being the last (*reported*) speaker. The pleas are equally valueless. Peter's address is simple, direct and forcible. It is not a decree nor an edict, nor in any form like papal thunder,

He justifies his interference at the outset, using language of which we have a parallel in 1 Chron. 28 : 4, 5. He was the apostle of the Circumcision as well as a Jew. Naturally, he might be supposed for the Mosaic law. He had been employed to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, but he does not claim it as *his* work personally. He was only one of them. God made choice "among them" (v. 7). Here the word "gospel" is used, and in ch. 20 : 24, instead of "the way," "the word," "the doctrine," the usual phrases. Perhaps the words of the apostolic commission (see Mark 18 : 15) recalled and made it proper. His language requires no special explanation. He gives all the honor of his appointment and of the people's believing to God's grace. He argues that God, who knoweth men's hearts—what they are, and what they need—having given the Gentile hearers the Holy Ghost, as to Jews, and put no difference between the two classes (v. 9), but purified their hearts—not by rites or ceremonies, like circumcision, but by the belief of the gospel—it is tempting (v. 10), insulting, God to demand what he did not, and to put a yoke on the neck of the Gentiles which they themselves and their fathers had found irksome. He assumes, quite justly, that circumcision carried all the rest of the law with it. He is speaking especially to the Pharisees, now indeed Christians (see v. 5). They are the movers here. This is an argument to them. He knew what they meant by their plea. The law, as they read and enforced it, had been irksome in the extreme. "Do not you know," he seems to say, "how hard it has been to us and to our fathers? How little we have kept it!" His conclusion, which is also an argument in the matter and a determining element, is in v. 11: "We believe" on good grounds (just stated) that we shall be saved—salvation is the matter in dispute, and how to obtain it (vs. 1, 5) "through

the grace of the" (not *our*) "Lord Jesus, even as they"—namely, those referred to in vs. 7-9.

Among the points deserving of special emphasis the following should be noted:

(a.) The momentous nature of this question: "Shall we depend for salvation on Jesus only, or on Jesus *and* some observances which we can dispense and obtain?" It is the question that was raised again at the Reformation: "Is man justified by faith in Christ, or by Christ *and* some other things?" It has its parallel still. There are ordinances, like baptism and the Supper, to be observed *because we have faith in Jesus*. Are they to be so regarded as to be essential to salvation?

(b.) The value of church history, which is the record of the experience of the Church. On this Peter falls back. He remembers the time when he thought all outside the Mosaic ritual especially unclean till the ritual had been complied with. He had heard the word of ch. 11:9, and acted on it. He retains the very word he had heard in the vision (cleansed = purifying, the same Greek word; see *Revision*), and argues justly from the facts. God had, with a full knowledge of the men, treated them exactly as he treated Hebrews. Who were they that they should make conditions God had not made? So he pleads the facts. But history is the true statement of facts. It is a serious calamity to many now, and a loss to the truth, that so little is known of the history of the Church. That it is a great means of teaching is apparent from the large portion of revelation itself that is made up of history.

(c.) See how human nature asserts itself in the Pharisees, though now believing in Jesus, carrying over with them that in which they had so long boasted—in their agitating, discussing and laboring in concert to carry their point.

(d.) See how grace triumphs over nature. Calmly, with becoming moderation, putting themselves with the rest of the believers, the leaders, including apostles, appeal to God's doings and to Christian experience, and they carry the point—not in a secret conclave, but in open assembly. This is Peter's last appearance in the Acts; v. 11 is his last word. (We have here no "Pauline" and "Petrine theologies," separate and distinct.) Oh that they who set up such proud pretensions in Peter's name would but study it and catch its spirit!

(e.) What a heritage the Church has that is unencumbered with anything that claims to stand alongside the full, perfect, atoning and unparticipated work of Christ! Salvation by grace through faith in him,—let that be our watchword, our message, our song.

H E A R I N G A N D D O I N G.

BY THE REV. JOHN S. MACINTOSH, D. D.

Jan. 13.—James 1: 16-27.

FATHERHOOD and childhood are in these verses—the highest and holiest fatherhood, the sweetest and most submissive childhood; the busy, blessed Father of lights, stainless, changeless, the Light in whom is no darkness; and the busy, beneficent child of light, first hearing the law of love, and then freely and of pure delight, yet obediently and in real service, doing that divine will, thus living out his religion pure and undefiled.

Everywhere true fatherhood will speak tenderly, but firmly and with authority; everywhere true childhood will hear willingly, yet dutifully, and obey with joy, yet with sense of right and responsibility; and the end of this parental training and filial service shall be, like father, like child; the child will prove his parentage in his deeds. “Be ye merciful, as your Father is merciful,” “pure, as he is pure;” “be ye holy, for I am holy,” ring out afresh in those stirring words of earnest, honest James: Hear and do. What a sublime stimulus to our adorning the gospel should be found in the fact that our Father’s glory and our characters are bound together!

Sin is darkness, is death; therefore it cannot be of God. The life, the light, is his only; therefore “do not err,” and

let no one deceive you. Evil is not of God, but all good is from him—a worthy gift, free and pure like the hand that gives. Good is born of God, comes from him as Father; evil has its own parent, sin. Gifts good and perfect have ever come, and are still coming, from above, an unstinted and unmeasured stream, flowing out of the Fountain of living water. From our Father comes that steady bounty so liberally supplying our daily wants with good things; and his too that all-perfect boon of eternal life in his Son and by his Spirit. How good these gifts, full of thoughtful mercy and rich with grace! How perfect that boon of life, incorruptible, undefiled, unfading!

This loving Father of lights will have not only the lower heavens filled with stars shining with his glory, but also the higher heavens, his home, full of sons singing of his grace. The world of light, where it is only day, shall be thronged with the children of light. So God, who is light, sends forth his light, even his truth, and his children are born by the word of truth.

The Father speaks; the child hears, and the obedient child grows God-like.

I. THE FATHER SPEAKS (vs. 18, 21, 24 and 25).—We have a clearly-spoken word, the word of truth, an implanted word, a law perfect and liberating. Light is of light in every world. For us the Life is the Light, the Light of the world, the true Light that shineth in the darkness. That divine Light is, for man, truth spoken, intelligible—the word of truth. This light of the mind and the soul is like its Author, “without variableness or shadow of turning,” steady in its shining whether men hear or forbear, knowing no change by time that dims all earth-born fires, and bating not one beam for any word of man. That word of God, the light shining in the dark,

has neither day nor night, as have the stars overhead, and, unlike sun and moon, suffers not eclipse. What that living voice of the heavenly Father was for Christ's heroic dead, what it proved to the confessor in his cell and the martyr at the stake, what it showed itself to be in the mouths of Whitefield and Wesley, of Luther and Calvin, of Athanasius and Chrysostom, of Peter on Pentecost and of Paul at Athens, the same is it to-day for the teacher's heart and the listening class—the word, the only word of truth, the incorruptible word, the word that liveth and abideth for ever. It made Paul and Silas sing praises at midnight, and Felix trembled as it spoke to him so boldly of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come.

My Father's word! and it is like him! A life-giving word: in it God, who raiseth the dead, works by his renewing Spirit to summon out of their spiritual graves his innumerable children; "of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." To-day, in countless schools and churches, upon our home and foreign mission-fields, this mighty power of God is proving itself unchanged in sinners saved, in saints sanctified. Because of it the living are filling the New Jerusalem. Parents and teachers, speak it in faith.

My Father's word! and it is like him! Who by searching can exhaust it? It will stand looking into (v. 25). Let us be found bending over it, searching into it, meditating on it day and night: delight thyself in the law of the Lord. As John (John 20:5) stooped down and looked into that wonderful sepulchre where the mystery of godliness unbared itself, so (for the word is the very same) you must bow down and gaze into the ever-deepening depth of wisdom and truth if you would find God's pearls; and you may "continue" gazing and searching, and never exhaust these deep things of God. My Fath-

er's word deserves this patient study; his exhaustless teaching demands it.

My Father's word! and it is like him! It is the king-ly word of the King of kings—the royal law, the perfect law. We are not without law, but under law to Christ. God has given a rule to direct us how we are to glorify and enjoy him. This rule of the Holy Scriptures is like all true law, clear, distinct, binding: in it unite the purest reason, the highest justice, the most solemn sanctions. It is the savor of life to the hearing and doing, the savor of death to the hearing and disobeying. "The law of the Lord is perfect." His works all praise their Author, and the chief work is full of his glory. Obeyed, this law is perfection, for the law lived out is the life of Christ. And the world under its sway would be a perfect world, where unto God would be rendered the things that are God's, Cæsar have all his own, and my neighbor be my brother.

My Father's word! and it is like him! The law that makes free, the law that is for free souls, the law of love that casts out fear, that binds me to my Father's heart and shows that man is my brother; the law of life and love that lifts me up above the slave's cowering service; the full, sweet, comforting word, freeing me when in Christ from all condemnation, from all fear of men, of death and the future.

No word like His who is my Father with a more than mother's heart; who stands to me, as Bengel says, both in the place of father and of mother (v. 18); who says, "Though a mother may forget, yet will I not forget thee." My Father, who teacheth like this, I will hear thee.

II. THE CHILD HEARS.—Every one born of God hears his voice: "They shall be all taught of God;" "He that is of God heareth God's word." Obedience is the proof of the new birth. As the prerogative of the Father is to

speak out his will, which is law, so the privilege of the child is to hear his Father's good pleasure. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak."

Before the teaching Lord stand strangers and children: the stranger hears, and does not obey: the child both hears and obeys; he is not a hearer only, but first hears, then does. There may be a sort of doing without hearing, like an alien's compliance with the unknown laws of a strange land, but there can be no childlike living without childlike learning. The true child hears to do, and does to hear still more.

In this filial hearkening are found three marked and distinguishing features.

(a.) There is, first, *the attentive silence of warmest affection* (v. 20). The thoughtful and loving child will be swift to hear, slow to speak. Years ago I often watched the godly and thoughtful son of a godly and thoughtful father; and I have known that youth, then a distinguished graduate of no mean Old-World university, stop suddenly in an unfinished sentence, turn his head eagerly and listen with fixed eyes, for his father was speaking. Swift to hear was he, for he was affectionate to an intense degree toward his loving father, and reverent was he in the presence of one who had proved himself a God-sent leader and teacher of men. So is it with God's child. Nothing more plainly marks an old saint than his eagerness to hear the pure, simple truth of God: while earth has a thousand sweet voices and home many a thrilling tone, God's word is for him sweeter than honey and more precious than gold. He is more anxious to be taught than to teach: while noisy novices are swift to speak, he is slow, and he waits for his message from the King. If in his study of divine truth the Lord's Spirit leads him into the green pastures and beside the still waters, he goes

gladly, and tarries with delight in the heavenly school—swift to hear, slow to speak.

How entirely different is this childlike learner from (v. 22) the mere hearer for amusement! What a suggestive thought! hearing for amusement! What an unbaring of many a heart in the school and sanctuary of to-day! Among the eager-hearted children, drinking in the waters of truth like thirsty lands the rain, are those who are listening for amusement, pastime, fashion, only as they would to a lecture or recitation or public performance; no reverence of spirit before the lawgiving King, nor affection for the tenderly-teaching Father. Such heartless, irreverent listeners, strangers not children, may be ready enough in their ambition for mastery to speak their crude views, their half-truths and man-born dogmas, and if refused supremacy or from the truth confuted of error may not be slow to kindle a fire that may be Nadab's, but certainly is not Aaron's—will probably be swift to a wrath that worketh not God's holy end of peace and purity. In the child of God there must be none of this polluted passion.

(b.) The child will hear with the *filial submissiveness of true humility*. “*Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth.*” These words rise ever from his soul. Before God he will behave and quiet himself (Ps. 131) as a child. With meekness will he “receive the word which is able to save the soul.” He is a sinner needing salvation: that fact determines his place and decides his attitude. His place is down in the dust: his confession is, “Unclean! unclean!” Hence, when in the mirror polished by the hand of the Spirit, and held up to him in God's clear light, he sees himself the vile, helpless outcast, with wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, he forgets it not, but, “foul, he to the fountain flies;” and hearing, as he cries, “What shall I do

to be saved?"—"Wash and be clean," he plunges into the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and comes out "whiter than snow." But he never "forgets what manner of man he was."

Not for him is it enough that the word has been *spoken to* him; he will have it *planted within him*, so that his inner life and the word may be a unity, that *his second nature* may be a divine nature, and that he may glorify the Father whose love has saved and changed him. But this new life cannot grow save through the death of the old. To make room for God's planting the old weeds (v. 21) must be uprooted. The fountain of the heart must be cleansed if the filthy, reeking stream of sensuality and the raging floods of malignant passions shall no more desolate the Eden of the new creation. Nothing but humility and submissiveness will come victorious out of such an ordeal.

(c.) The child will hear with *eager desire and honest efforts to fulfill* the Father's law. Sonship and service are proportionate—as the son, so is the service. The perfect Son yielded the perfect service. The truer and higher our childhood, the truer and higher will be our obedience. We are not to hear merely to learn, but learn that we may live. Christianity is both a science and an art: it is exact hearing of exact truth, and the appropriate embodiment of that sublime truth in worthy forms. First the converted soul is heard saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and then he is seen, with a higher ardor than he displayed of old, doing with all his might the law of love—making his life-work the will of his Father. Such must we make our obedience—the energetic and steady fulfilling of the commandments so holy, just and good. "My meat and drink is to do my Father's will."

This busy child of light, who spreads God's sunshine

with its song and joy, its peace and life, wheresoever he goes, is "blessed" in his active service. In that childlike work he enjoys the child's blessing. Taking heed both how he hears and what he hears, taking heed both to himself and to the doctrine, he finds it true that they have great peace who keep God's law, and even in this life he obtains the great reward provided for the honest servant.

III. THE OBEDIENT CHILD GROWS GODLIKE.—The true hearer becomes a joy to the brokenhearted and strength to the weak (v. 27.) Can it be otherwise when we sit at His feet who is a husband to the widow and a father to the fatherless?

When I want to see God I look at Christ. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Christ is at once the embodied law and the manifested likeness of God. The law is love; the following of Christ is the fulfilling of the law: to follow Christ is to be an obedient and Christlike child, and Christ is the image of God.

But Christ was at once true to God and to man: he loved God and his neighbor. There I see the purest religion. There I see the religion which stood the test of God and won the smile of the Father. That life was pure and undefiled: moral purity and a pious charity marked it. Heavenly to the highest degree was that life of Christ; yes, and human to the deepest depth. With God he lived, though he touched the publicans and the harlots to serve them; but while he was in heaven, ever with the Father, he dwelt amid the widowhood and orphanhood of earth. He who was still with God, who was never left alone because ever doing what pleased the Father, placed the child on his knees and took into his heart all the unutterable sorrow of the widow of Nain. So he sheweth us the true God—not a God only light,

not a God only love, but the true God, at once the Light and the Love, holy and merciful.

The perfect law which Christ fulfilled, the royal law, and which my Father gives me because he loves me and would have me like himself, says to me, Be pure as light, be unspotted in the world, be true to God; and while thus pure forget not to be tender as love, be pitiful as your Father, be true to man. Holiness and humanity are the twin demands of the perfect law, obedience is religion pure and undefiled; that devotion is Christly, and Christly is Godlike. Doing the will of the Lord thus brings the beauty of the Lord, and likeness to his Father is the child's purest joy, rarest reward and highest glory. Therefore be ye hearers and doers. There are some who neither hear nor do; that is Satanic: there are some who hear and do not; that is delusive and hypocritical: there are some who hear and do; that is Christlike, and great is their reward on earth and in heaven.

THE TONGUE.

By JAMES B. SHAW, D. D.

Jan. 20.—James 3:1-18.

THE apostle in these memorable words brings some thoughts before us which are worthy of our most profound and prayerful attention.

He speaks of the power of the tongue. He compares the tongue to the helm of a ship. The helm is a little thing in itself, and still more insignificant when compared with the mighty fabric which it controls, and yet it holds the ship to her course. The storm may rage, the elements may muster their strength, it may be such a tempest as overtook St. Paul on his way to Rome, and yet the helm holds the vessel to her course. Let the rudder be swept away or let any part of its gearing break, and the ship is at the mercy of the winds and the waves. Such is the power of the human tongue. Under the control of a sanctified will it keeps the man to his course, headed, as he should be, for the harbor of eternal repose.

But the power of the tongue is much more apparent when we consider the widespread mischief which it may cause. "Behold how great a matter [or forest] a little fire kindleth!" A spark will be enough, and if the fire be once started who shall stay its progress? Human efforts avail nothing. It will burn so long as there is anything left to consume; it will burn until Heaven

comes to our relief: nothing but a copious and long-continued rain can put it out. There is hardly a more hideous sight in the world than one of the burnt districts in our Adirondack Mountains; and the saddest thought of all is, that this fated district can never regain what it has lost, can never be what it was. Other trees and shrubs may grow up to take the place of those which have been swept away, but there will always be enough to remind us of that beauty and glory which can never come back. And perhaps a lighted match carelessly thrown among the dry leaves was the cause of it all. "Behold how great a forest a little fire kindleth!" Many families have been broken up, many churches have been disbanded, many communities have been set by the ears —sometimes a whole land has been laid under reproach —by a word maliciously or heedlessly spoken. I have heard of an institution of learning buried too deep ever to reach the light again, and two evil tongues dug the grave.

Then the injuries which the lawless tongue inflicts are for the most part irreparable. There is nothing so hard to heal as a wounded reputation—the scar will always be there—and at the same time there is nothing so sensitive. Scarcely anything cuts so deep as an unkind word. Of all the weapons that pride, envy and hatred have at their disposal, save me from a lawless tongue! Where is the man or the woman, worthy of the name, who would not sooner be maimed than be charged with some crime which he or she could not possibly have committed? How many hopes the slanderous tongue has blighted! how many hearts it has broken! how many graves it has dug! And they are irreparable wrongs. We may bitterly repent of the sin committed against our brother, we may put forth our utmost endeavors to undo the evil which

we have done, but unless we can bring back the dead we cannot repair the injury.

And this evil tongue, which gives our brother a wound which can never be healed, is no respecter of persons. It spares neither age nor sex. Genuine goodness, exalted worth, a life devoted to charity, are no protection. Death does not love a shining mark any better than slander does, and no man can go so high that the poisoned arrow cannot reach him. Shimei came forth to curse King David; to curse him when he was flying from the face of his unnatural child; to curse him in the darkest day which the sweet singer of Israel had ever seen; to curse him, his head so white and his heart breaking within him.

When the only-begotten Son of God came to sojourn with us, and came on such a mission, slander followed him from his humble home in Nazareth to the sepulchre in the garden. They charged him with sedition; they charged him with treason; they charged him with blasphemy; they charged him with being in league with Beelzebub, the prince of the devils; they called him a "fellow," and said that he was not fit to live. No one could have felt such false accusations so keenly as did our dear Lord. Have we not heard him say, "Reproach hath broken my heart"? And if they did not spare the immaculate Son of God, who may hope to escape? Nay, the purest, the sweetest, the holiest, the highest, the most revered and the most beloved, are the surest to be assailed. There is no such joy for an envious man as to drag some great name through the dust.

We may, then, well believe what St. James tells us, that the evil tongue is under a diabolic inspiration. We should hardly dare to use the words unless an apostle had given them to us: "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defil-

eth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell." *It is set on fire of hell!* The tongue of the liar or the slanderer or the profane swearer is touched by a coal brought from the pit. The man speaks as he is moved by that fallen spirit who wanted to be something more than an archangel, who wanted to be something higher than the Highest. Alas! that dark world is a more intolerable place to him because he went from the light and the glory of the beatific vision. He inspires the talebearer, the gossip, the heedless talker, the obscene jester, and, above all, the malicious libeler. The man who scatters arrows and firebrands and death in a community, and does it as if it were the sport of a holiday, is under a diabolic inspiration. And if this heedless talker, this man so regardless of the feelings of his fellow-men,—if this man is a follower of Christ, then his evil-speaking is the profanation of a holy thing. That tongue which he puts to so bad a use has been set apart for the Lord, just as sacred a thing as the pot of manna or the rod that budded. To use this consecrated tongue for any evil purpose is like taking a lamp from the sanctuary to hang up in some den of infamy; it is a desecration, a profanation, a sacrilege in the fullest meaning of that awful word.

The tongue is spoken of in Scripture as the glory of our frame. It is to his tongue that the Psalmist alludes when he says, "O my God, my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise, even with my glory." It is the tongue which lifts us so far above the inferior orders of creation. They can plan and build, they can love and hate, they can sing and moan; but they cannot speak. They have their cities and governments and granaries; they have their armies and wars and conquests; but they have no words. The tongue arouses a righteous indignation,

it awakens a holy enthusiasm, it inflames a people with heroic resolves, and it has won multitudes and multitudes more to the obedience of the faith. The tongue, as if on eagles' wings, bears our thoughts and thanks and aspirations to the ear of our Father. What occurred on the day of Pentecost shows the power and the glory of the tongue. It was the words of St. Peter which wrought such wonders that day, while the cloven tongues of flame were sent to let the Church see what was to be her chief weapon and her chief instrumental help in the work and the warfare to which she had been called. And shall we let Satan take possession of this glory of our frame? Shall we let him use it to bring his nefarious purposes to pass—this tongue with which we bless man, this tongue with which we praise God? Shall Satan use it to hurt my brother or insult my Father? If the fallen archangel would spread a scandal, if he would wound some good man to the death, if he would send some saintly woman to a premature grave, if he would publish some deadly heresy or cover the slandered daughter of Zion with a cloud, he must have a human tongue to do it; and, to our shame be it said, he has never been hindered by the want of a tongue.

This accuser of the brethren went before the Lord with a railing accusation against his servant Job. He did not believe that the patriarch of Uz was the man that God took him to be, and he was sure that if he once had Job in his power he could make it so appear. He alleged that Job was a mercenary man—that he was serving his Maker for hire, and if his wages were stopped he would soon show his colors. Satan said this with his own tongue, but he has been under no necessity of using his own tongue since then. He has always had tongues enough at his disposal. Perhaps there is not a tongue

on earth which he has not at some time pressed into his service.

This thought seems to have been in the mind of the apostle: "If"—he puts it simply as a supposable case—"if a man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and is able to bridle the whole body." The man who has his tongue under complete control has gone as high as man can go here. The tongue is the last thing that is brought into subjection. The eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, every organ of the body, every faculty of the soul, may be brought under the power of a sanctified will, while the tongue still holds out. St. James was so struck with this that he calls our attention to the fact that no human power can tame the lawless tongue. It is something which no man can do for himself, and which assuredly no other man or body of men can do for him. He must have help from on high. It was a sense of his weakness in this respect which brought King David to his knees. Hear him exclaim, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth. Keep the door of my lips." As if the keeping the door of his lips was something which God, and God alone, could do. And I am sure this prayer becomes every man as much as it did the one who was so dear to God. I am sure that no man can better begin the day than with this petition: "Set a watch before my mouth." Nay, even that may not be enough: "Keep *thou* the door of my lips." Let no word this day go forth from my mouth that can hurt my brother or harm the cause or grieve my God. Happy the man who at the close of the day can think of no word which he would like to recall! The man who has brought his tongue under complete control has solved the great problem of the Christian life; nothing after that can hold out against him.

The words which a man speaks, take his whole life through, are perhaps the clearest revelation of his character; and this is specially and emphatically true of his unpremeditated words, the words which flow from his heart as waters from a fountain. The man thinks before he does a deed, he pauses before he pens a line, but the word comes out before he is aware of it; and the word is the man—the man coming forth from his hiding-place to let us see who and what he is.

And do not the Scriptures teach, and teach most distinctly, that the words of a man will go quite as far as his deeds in settling his eternal destiny? Is it not written, “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned”? And are there not still more fearful utterances going before these?—“But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment.” Every idle word, every word that brings nothing to pass! Nor let us lose sight of the fact that our blessed Lord spoke thus to men who had just uttered words for which they could never be forgiven—words which settled their doom beyond reprieve: they had spoken blasphemous words against the Holy Ghost. Perhaps some who were standing by secretly congratulated themselves that they were not the ones who had committed this unpardonable sin—that no such blasphemous and irrevocable words had passed the door of their lips. And it was as if the Saviour said to such, “This may show you what an awful gift speech is; this may show you how earnestly a man should watch over every word which goes forth from his mouth; for in the day of judgment not only every blasphemous word, but every idle word, every word which brought nothing to pass, shall receive the condemnation of the Judge.” And did not our gracious Master

also intimate that the idle word might lead to the blasphemous word—that the man who spoke unadvisedly with his lips might in some unguarded hour say that which would shut the door of hope against him?

Dear friends, if a record of all the words which we have spoken since we came into the world should be put into our hands, who would dare to read it? who would be willing to believe it? Is it possible, you would be ready to say,—Is it possible that I could have spoken so many idle, so many foolish, so many unkind, so many untruthful, so many filthy, so many blasphemous, words? It cannot be. Ah! do not flatter yourself that it cannot be. They are keeping such a record in the heavenly world, and it is an infallible record; it is kept by an unerring hand. They make no mistakes up there.

How true it is—may the Lord help you to believe it!—how true it is that as we mingle with our fellow-men from day to day in the house, in the store, in the market-place, at the polls, in the sanctuary, in the house of mourning, at the marriage-feast, by the side of the grave,—how true it is that we are making just such a record! And by and by we shall have to meet it. “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” We cannot see the book; we cannot get a glimpse of the scribe; we cannot hear the pen as it passes over the page; but it is going all the while.

LIVING AS IN GOD'S SIGHT.

BY THE REV. HOWARD CROSBY, D. D.

Jan. 27.—James 4: 7-17.

THERE are two, and only two, eternal kingdoms in the universe—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. The members or subjects of the one will enjoy eternal life, and the subjects of the other will suffer eternal punishment. This world belongs to the kingdom of Satan, and hence the Scriptures call Satan the prince of this world. All men in their fallen nature are subjects of Satan's kingdom, and only by the strong arm of God can they be plucked out of his kingdom and transplanted into the kingdom of God. This is the plain Scripture teaching, against which a subtle infidelity in the name of Christianity contends. This infidelity makes light of sin and Satan, sees human nature to be very good, and speaks complacently of God as a Friend, but does not seek him as a Saviour. It finds in natural evolution the solution of the problem of man's destiny, and practically does away with responsibility and conscience. Christ to such is an early development of humanity in its purity, after which model all of us in due time will follow. All this is simple naturalism *versus* revelation. It is the prompting of the natural, sinful and proud heart against the supernatural and the light of conscience. It cannot deny Christ, and therefore it *degrades* him to the level of Buddha or Socrates.

The revealed truth of God is directly antagonistic to every point of this false philosophy. It declares that "the whole world lieth in wickedness;" that "he who will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God;" that "if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him;" that "Satan deceiveth the whole world;" that Satan is "the god of this world;" and that Christians are "delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." This translation is always shown to be a divine process, the work of the Holy Spirit over and against Nature; and hence the kingdom of God into which the believer is translated is described as "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The passage from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God can, therefore, only be by a complete abandonment of self and a complete surrender to the Holy Spirit. There is no germ of holiness in ourselves on which to trust. The heart is naturally at enmity with God. Hence humility is the first of Christian virtues: not that God wishes to see us debased, but that self-abasement is in accordance with the truth of our character, and is the way to exaltation. To use a very rude metaphor, just as a man cannot go up another hill till he has gone down the one on which he happens to be, so a soul cannot be exalted in God until it has thoroughly come down from self. To suppose that God wishes to humble us as a human enemy would humble us to gloat over us and boast over us in his pride, is most absurd, and yet that is the picture many frame when they are told that God would humble them. God wishes to humble us because he can exalt us in no other way. Unless we are emptied of self he cannot fill us with his Holy Spirit.

This is no arbitrary act of God. It is in accordance with the truth of things. Not till Job abhorred himself

and repented in dust and ashes could God bestow upon him the fullness of blessing. Sin nourished in the soul is an exclusive power which successfully debars all divine activity. It is because of this antagonism that the apostle in our context makes his antitheses : "Submit yourselves to *God*; resist the *devil*, and he will flee from you. Draw *nigh to God*, and he will draw *nigh to you*." He then shows that cleansing of heart and life must begin with penitence : "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded; be afflicted and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." Then comes our text : "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." The apostle then gives the two forms in which human pride most frequently appears, preventing this humility : first, the form of evil-speaking, in which a man makes himself a judge over his fellow and also over the law (which forbids him to be a judge); and, secondly, the form of worldly absorption in our plans, as if we had command over the future. These proud principles stand in the way of all humility, and we must be rid of them if we would be exalted by the hand of God.

And what is that exaltation which God accomplishes for the soul? It must be the only true and permanent exaltation. Exaltation in Satan's kingdom must be debasement, for it is exaltation in sin, and sin depresses and debases. The exaltation, then, in this case must be an illusion. The true exaltation must be *in the truth*. It must be in the region where God dwells. It must be in righteousness and holiness. Such an exaltation implies satisfaction and joy. It also implies its own continuance, because of its divine character. It is man's finality in the kingdom of God as contrasted with his finality in the kingdom of Satan. These truths, which we have outlined from

revelation, accord perfectly with all that we see with the dim light of our reason. The duality of good and evil, right and wrong, weal and woe, is indelibly impressed upon man's consciousness. No scheme of morals or life satisfies the mind without it. The antagonism and struggle are defined and explained by God's word. The great gulf fixed between the two destinies, recognized before, is now seen to be bottomless by the light of God's truth. Reason gives its ready assent to the declaration that now, before we reach that dividing gulf, we must abandon the kingdom of Satan by a penitent self-abnegation, and must enter into the kingdom of God by a humble and hearty faith, if we are to abide for ever with truth and righteousness and joy and peace. There can be, in the nature of the case, no middle ground. What is not of faith is sin. They who live not by faith in God's grace must live under the dominion of sin. God's grace is the only source of righteousness to a sin-ruined world. The self-righteous are simply sinners with a mask—hypocrites, deceiving their own souls. They make smooth and clean the surface, and then complacently gaze on it. It is their very depravity that makes them satisfied with such a delusion. The depths of the heart's sinfulness they avoid exploring. They judge of holiness by human standards, and hence of the awful nature of sin they have no idea. God in his mercy sends them calamity and distress, which shake their foundations and expose their weakness, in order to show them that their only safety is in him; but even under these terrible blows of the divine providence the sinful heart is often hardened and the guidance of the divine hand rejected. We may find one clue at least to the meaning of human calamity in this design of God to show man his utter impotence and need. Without such rough treatment we should build our hopes on the

sand. Even when we have accepted the divine grace, we need these severities to keep us from new growths of pride which would mar our growth in the spiritual life.

There is one phrase especially in our text on which we desire to lay stress : “*In the sight of the Lord.*” Our humility is to be wrought in his sight. This implies, in the first place—

1. That the humility is *not a humbling of ourselves before our fellow-men.* The abjectness and servility of one man to another are not pleasing to God. We are all sinners alike in his eyes, and any humbling of ourselves before our fellow-man is only accessory to his pride and vanity. If we injure our fellow-man, we are to take the attitude of penitence before him. This exceptional case is made by our special sin against him ; and the one to whom we express our penitence and whose forgiveness we ask, if he has any real manhood in him, will hasten to forgive, and to restore the equilibrium which existed before. He will feel uncomfortable until this is done. But, this exceptional case aside, no man is to humble himself before his fellow-man. There is a courtesy of place and a respectful regard to be recognized between employé and employer, between youth and age, between child and parent, but this is not to be confounded with the self-humbling to which our attention is now called. This self-humbling is a confession of sin and unworthiness and a renunciation of all rights and claims. Between men it would be an abject servility, such as is often seen in barbarous and semi-barbarous countries as the result of personal fear or the device of cunning ambition. The believer’s humility is before the Lord, and not before man.

2. The believer’s humility is therefore, in the second place, *a true humility.* The Lord is not mocked. He knows the heart. It will not do to present to him the

outward prostration for the inward repentance, the words of humility for the self-renunciation of the heart. Men are so accustomed to deceive one another that they think they can deceive the Lord. They carry their worldly habits into their religious life, but they only deceive themselves, not the Lord. A true humility is alive, and bears fruit in a new and holy life. A false humility is a dead thing, and can produce no fruit. The soul is left in its sins; the man is still a subject of Satan's kingdom. A true humility sees the truth regarding self, that the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, and cries out for God. The man abandons self for God. He abhors self, and finds a refuge in Jesus Christ, who is made unto him wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. He now rejoicingly cries, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." In Christ only he glories; in him only he lives. This is the glorious "lifting up" which always accompanies a true humility.

"What!" says an objector, "is that a true humility which is humble *in order to be exalted?*" Yes, it is. It *would not* be if the exaltation were to be in the line of the humility; that is, if the man was to be exalted in the very pride from which he humbles himself. But when the man is to be exalted by the divine grace and the divine Spirit, that is a true humility which foresees this exaltation, and acts in view of it. There is no contradiction, therefore, in the implied reasoning of our text: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." Our Saviour holds out the same inducement when he says, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18: 14). The true humility is *in the sight of the Lord*, and feels the influence of his grace, and commits itself to the guidance of that grace, which it knows will not fail. So far, therefore, from being a hypocrisy because

it seeks exaltation, it is an honest progress in holiness. It is not a humility of despair, but of faith. It knows its own worthlessness, but it knows also the Lord's grace.

3. The believer's humility, in the third place, being in the sight of the Lord, implies a *life* in the sight of the Lord. Not that the Lord sees him, for the Lord sees every one, but that he sees the Lord—that he is ever conscious of the divine presence, and therefore orders his life, not according to its appearance to men, but according to its heart-value. He sees Him who is invisible, and his motives come from that source, so invisible to the world. The sin in his thought or purpose is as odious to him as the sin in the outward commission could be. To cultivate an evil imagination is to him as hateful as to cultivate an evil speech or an evil conduct. The Lord's light shines on him, and that light reveals sin in the heart. He is never found justifying himself, or flattering himself with human purity and excellence. His comfort comes from no such proud and false source, but from resting his evil heart on the pardoning and cleansing love of his Redeemer. And in that love he finds a true holiness springing up in his soul. How utterly the world fails to comprehend this divine definition of religion! How it mistakes almsgiving, penance, genuflexions, external morality, priestcraft and ritual for this life hid with Christ in God!

4. The believer's humility, in the fourth place, implies a *life of prayer*. We cannot see God without praying to him as the source of pardon and holiness, the only guardian and guide of the soul. If we feel that we are in the sight of God, it is because God is in our sight. We see him, and therefore know that he sees us. The God of an agnostic the agnostic never imagines as seeing him. If he does not see God, he does not practically believe that God sees him. The agnostic is a practical atheist. The

soul that sees God, and therefore knows that it is in God's sight, can no more hesitate to pray than water can hesitate to run down hill. Prayer is the natural impulse of the newborn soul. "Behold he prayeth," was the proof to Ananias that Saul of Tarsus was converted. A constant view of God is a constant impulse to prayer, and the highest style of godly life is that enjoined by the apostle when he says, "Pray without ceasing." The humility that empties self seeks the fullness of God. The lamentable lack in ourselves must be supplied from him, and hence we live lives of prayer if we reach the normal standard of godliness. Prayer is not suggested by a ritual nor by a sense of duty, nor even by a sense of need, but by a sight of God as our only Saviour and Upholder. We see in him everything, in ourselves nothing. What but prayer can fit the case? A Christian who does not love prayer is a contradiction in terms. The man walks in midnight darkness who prays by law and not by love, and the prayer so offered is no prayer. The proof of genuine prayer is humility in the sight of God. Where this is, legality cannot enter. The sense of need and the view of God's grace alike forbid it.

The great world is seeking exaltation from man. Now, a stream cannot rise higher than its source. Hence all human exaltation must be ephemeral in duration and sin-mixed in kind. The worldly heart wishes no exaltation in holiness and truth. Such a lifting up would be odious to it. Yet such exaltation is the only enduring and pure one. It is exaltation in the kingdom of God. The world's exaltation is, to the worldly heart, but exaltation in the kingdom of Satan. Which will you choose?

If the former, then live in God's sight in that humility of heart which accepts the fullness of his grace, and which opens the gulf between you and human pride.

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

BY THE REV. ARTHUR MITCHELL, D.D.

Feb. 3.—Acts 15: 35—16: 1-10.

THIS lesson will bring us into very close intimacy with Paul. We shall at first walk to and fro with him at Antioch, see how the thought of his second great missionary journey grew up in his mind, listen to his plans and preparations, and then we shall travel with him through the mountain-gates of Cilicia out to the cities of Asia Minor, until at last we see the door of a new continent thrown open by God's own hand. We have, in the first place—

I. A NEW JOURNEY DECIDED ON.

I. What are the *reasons* for this decision? It shows what Christian zeal burned in Paul's heart that he should have entertained the thought of making this second journey. Had he not already done his share of this perilous work? He had led the way. Perils of the sea, perils of rivers and robbers, he had already endured to break a pathway for the gospel into those hostile pagan regions. He had faced the curses of the Jews at Iconium; at Lystra had been stoned, dragged through the city streets, and finally flung out of the gates for dead. A kind Providence had brought him and his companion, Barnabas, safely back with their lives, and now, says the last verse of the fourteenth chapter, "a long time they had abode at Antioch with the disciples."

It was very pleasant at Antioch. It needs a missionary fully to understand the sweetness of that simple phrase, *with the disciples*. Oh the longing for home, for its worship and its Christian companionship, which our missionaries often feel! They are not angels, above the wants and weakness of common men. "How I should love to hear just one sermon in the old church to-day, to feed my soul!" they often say. And when the prayer-meeting evening returns, again and again in their far-off fields, amidst coarse and wicked multitudes, amidst the squalor and filth and falsehood all around them, how wistfully they recall the pleasant walk, the old familiar street, the chapel-doors, the faces of "the brethren" greeting each other on the threshold, the pastor in his place, the honored elders, the dear old friends, the well-known voices in prayer, the precious hymns! *With the brethren!* Oh, little do we know, who dwell all our lives amidst these pleasant scenes, how full of sweet music to a lonely missionary's heart are those three words.

It was not only pleasant to abide at Antioch; certainly they were very *useful* there, "teaching and preaching the word of the Lord." Why not let well enough alone? Good work they were doing in the Presbytery of Northern Syria and in the General Assembly at Jerusalem; and, moreover, for these home churches were not the best men required? What disaster if these great centres, Jerusalem, Samaria, Cæsarea, Antioch, Tyre, should be allowed to decline! In fact, what an appalling mass of work yet remained to be done at home! Not even Judea was christianized as yet; and as for Antioch, think of her desecrated Sabbaths, her shameless theatres, her heathen concerts in the gardens of the Orontes, the groves of Daphne! Recall the influx of foreigners and of foreign ideas to this "queen of the East," as Gibbon calls her, the

emporium where the trade of the Tiber and the Euphrates met! All true; and Paul, we may be certain, saw and marked it all. But note one thing more in that verse from which we quoted last, the 35th. There were "many others" teaching and preaching at Antioch. So it is in America to-day. We Presbyterians have forty-eight hundred ministers at home, and only about one hundred and fifty abroad; and this, while there is already one evangelical minister here for every thousand of the people, and one out of every seven of our population is a member of the Church, with tens of thousands of Christian societies, associations and schools dotting the land! God saw that the best thing for Antioch herself was to send forth her best men to distant and still darker fields. Much more, then, should America increase her foreign missionary roll. Not her unknown teachers only, but her very leaders, Antioch sent out for this foreign work. We should do the same to-day. It is Livingstone who says to us, "The Church should send to the heathen her ablest men, her most highly educated, her best men; for the work on the foreign field is more difficult than the work at home."

As for the numbers demanded, think only of Siam—eight millions, with but five ordained missionaries! There is hardly a town of five thousand in America which has not more.

No wonder that Paul decided to go. A broad harvest is to be raised—not by planting one field, and doing nothing more until that is grown. Over many fields at once the seed must be cast, and God shall watch over it. Night and day it shall grow, and soon give multiplying seed for yet other fields. The missionary force sent to Antioch, and then to Asia Minor and to Europe, did not weaken—it strengthened—the Church at Jerusalem. Through all

the first home-churches there, as well as "in Phenice and Samaria, it caused great joy to all the brethren" (Acts 15:3, 4). It rolled back to the churches at home accumulating and mighty evidence of the power and faithfulness of their living Lord.

It was for such reasons as these that Paul and Barnabas determined to leave Antioch, and to go again to what in their time was the foreign field. The lands to which God directed them lay farther from Antioch, as men then traveled, than Turkey is from America to-day.

2. But let us now notice the *preparations* for the journey which must be made. Who shall form the party? Important question! When Christian laborers are to be so closely associated as missionaries must be in a foreign land, it is a vital matter, both for their happiness and their usefulness, that they should be congenial companions—especially that they should feel great confidence in each other's discretion and courage. Even in their tastes there must be some similarity. It is not unreasonable to ask it. Not all good men are stout-hearted enough for missionaries, and not all good missionaries can work well together. Barnabas and Paul knew each other well, and had labored in all harmony; but when Barnabas proposed to take with them again his nephew, Mark, who had started with them on their first tour, Paul objected. At the most critical point of their previous journey, just as they were about to leave the coast of Pamphylia and climb the northern mountains for the rude and dangerous regions of Lycaonia, Mark drew back (Acts 13:13; 15:38). Paul would not try him again. The apostle was not infallible; he may have erred on the side of severity in refusing the young man another trial. But the work was difficult and it was sacred. Paul felt that he must be sure of his comrades. Still, it is not strange that Barnabas

should have favored his young relative and insisted strongly on his making one of the company.

Paul would not yield. There was much to be said on both sides of the question. They could not agree, and accordingly they wisely decided to divide the field. There was ample room for both, where each could work according to his honest views. So, to a great extent, our missionaries do to-day. It would be somewhat difficult for Methodists and Baptists and Presbyterians and Episcopilians all to work together in the same party and on the same ground. And they need not. The field is large enough to give to each body a place of its own. It is for this reason that they have agreed generally to occupy fields somewhat separated. Yet their hearts are one. In their conferences and alliances we see them all listening with mutual delight to one another's successes, and offering unitedly their thanksgivings and their prayers. These good men, Paul and Barnabas, however decidedly they differed, did not part in anger. Paul afterward couples the name of Barnabas with his own as an active apostle of the same Master (1 Cor. 9:6); and of Mark he speaks in later years with affection and confidence. Paul's stern rebuke may have aroused his courage and made him always after a more resolute and determined man (Philem. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11; Col. 4:10, 11).

Paul chose Silas, already well known and useful, for his companion, and after a farewell meeting in which the Church with prayer and words of love "commended them to the grace of God," the two departed. We shall ask now for—

II. THE PLAN OF THEIR JOURNEY.

1. The former fields were revisited.

What did those fields *need*? The believers there need-

ed *sympathy*. Paul felt for them in the privations and trials which he knew they must endure. True, they were, many of them, of a different race from his, but to Paul they were "our brethren" (v. 36), and he thought of them with Christian love. He had not forgotten the conflict and hatred which the first preaching of the gospel in those heathen cities had aroused, the "contradiction and blasphemy" in Pisidia, how the people "raised persecution and expelled them out of their coasts;" the "assault" at Iconium; Lystra wild with fury, himself stoned, and, as the mob thought, killed. He knew that in such a land the converts they had gained for Christ must suffer "much tribulation." How hard for them to live year after year amidst such spiteful neighbors, to be hooted at and assaulted in the streets, to hear the stones rattling against their doors when they met to pray, to see their business ruined, their children hissed and scorned! Did they not need sympathy? And there are tens of thousands of Christian converts in heathen lands to-day in equal need of sympathy from us. They are of other races than our own; comparatively uncultivated they may be, some of them very ignorant and poor. But they suffer for Christ's sake more than we. They are "our brethren," and if we are like Paul we shall remember them with warm thoughts and earnest prayers.

These infant churches needed also *inspection*. "Let us go again," said Paul, "and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." Read closely the allusions in the book of Acts and in the Epistles to the first churches gathered by the apostles, and you will see that they needed frequent and careful supervision. In this respect they were like the native churches in our time in heathen lands. These converts, many of them, had just been plucked

out of utter paganism. They had breathed an atmosphere of selfishness and sensuality, of superstition and falsehood, ever since they were born. Even their elders and preachers were in many cases men who had no Christian parentage, had never seen a Christian example except for a few days in Paul, and not one copy of the Bible, nor so much as one New Testament, had the apostles to leave with them when they departed. It was inevitable that errors and abuses should creep in. They do still in the mission churches on every field. We must be very patient with them, and, when, as in our time, the mission-fields are extended an hundred-fold more than in Paul's day, we must remember how great the necessity for a frequent and thorough inspection by our missionaries of all their widely-scattered stations. Is this a work which can be done for a whole kingdom by three or four men? With fifty thousand ministers in America and as many more in England, we have to-day mission-fields larger and more populous fivefold than all the Asia Minor visited by Paul, where the missionary party is no larger than that little company which Antioch sent out in the very infancy of the Church.

It is evident from the history that the mission churches needed *instruction* also. A thousand questions plain to us were new and strange and full of perplexity to them. Discussions about so simple a thing as the meats they might eat arose, and there was need of special warning and teaching respecting some matters of the most ordinary morality (Acts 15:29). Think of Paul in the fullness of his Christian knowledge and his power burying himself for years in remote provinces to teach these weak, dark-minded peoples the first beginnings of Christian truth on such points as these! It may well rebuke the folly and fastidiousness of any Christians who feel themselves too nicely educated

to take a Sunday-school class made up of the ignorant and the poor, and the vanity of any preachers who think themselves too gifted to expend their lives on the heathen or even on a "country parish" in their own land.

We have now seen what these former fields of the apostles' labors *needed*. We must take a glance also at what they *gave*.

They gave *multiplying converts*. Paul found that the churches he had planted, notwithstanding all their disadvantages, "increased in numbers daily." His visit gave them a new impulse.

The parallel between missions then and now is still maintained. In no part of Christendom to-day is the rate of increase in the churches equal to what we see in the churches planted in heathen lands. Select the most favored portions of our Presbyterian Church, the synods longest settled, best supplied with pastors, Sunday-schools, colleges, and where there are still millions of unconverted souls to be won to Christ; and yet the rate of increase in their churches is not equal to that found in the mission churches even on the benighted coast of Africa. If we turn to our churches in Siam, in Persia, Mexico, Japan, Syria, the growth there has been from four to ten times more rapid than at home.

Another fruit yielded by these first mission-fields was *ripening Christian character*. These converts were "established in the faith."

Notwithstanding the faults to be expected in mission churches in their early years, both in Paul's day and ours, there has always been witnessed growth in knowledge and grace, and on every field lives which have filled the hearts of our missionaries with joy. The writer of these pages has this very day been in conversation with a missionary, and has listened with surprise and pleasure to

his account of the sacrifices in behalf of their faith made by the converts in one of the tropical valleys of Zitacuaro. Here were laboring people giving to the cause of the gospel a proportion of their scanty means rarely given by the most earnest Christians at home, and a pastor serving these poor and scattered flocks who belonged to a family of wealth and high position, but whose kindred had cast him off on his accepting Christ, whose own mother and sisters have refused for years, despite his entreaties, to see his face, and who, after having suffered the loss of inheritance and home for the sake of Christ, was now preaching his gospel where death threatened him and where assassins had waylaid and assaulted him, seeking his life. Of men and churches "established in the faith" there are nowhere brighter instances to be met than some we find on heathen ground.

And these fields yielded also *most notable help*. From the neighborhood of Derbe came Timothy, for many years the favorite companion of Paul in his toilsome life, and apparently the most congenial and efficient helper he ever had.

The beginnings of religious knowledge, an acquaintance with the Old Testament, had been planted in his heart by his godly mother, a Jewess, who, even in that region of idolatry and ignorance, feared God and wisely taught her child. But it would appear that the occasion of Timothy's full conversion to Christ was Paul's first visit to Derbe, about three or four years before the date of this journey. We may believe that Timothy, at that time perhaps about eighteen years of age, was among the multitudes who listened to the preaching of Paul; that he witnessed the "persecutions and afflictions which came upon him at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra" (2 Tim. 3:11); that he saw the apostle stoned, and was one of

those who stood over him at Lystra and saw him revive after being stoned. Timothy never forgot those scenes and the teachings of that first visit. As Paul now returns on his second tour, see what progress this youth has made and what a name he has won! He is "well reported of." Not only Derbe, but Lystra and Iconium, three cities, send testimony to his zeal and usefulness. The heart of Paul is drawn out to him at once. He is scarcely twenty-three, and yet he becomes the chosen confidant and companion of this chief apostle; for fifteen years he labors in connection with him in his missionary plans, and after Paul's death still for thirty years more he maintains the good fight of faith. At last, says the old tradition, he fell a martyr at Ephesus at the great festival of Diana, protesting in the streets against the license of the scene, clubbed to death by the frenzied mob.

The annals of modern missions tell of numbers of "native helpers" who have rendered like precious aid to the cause of Christ; and there have been more than one who, without his advantages, have more than equaled the devotion and courage of Timothy. Have you ever read the life of Quala, the native preacher of Burmah, or of Papehia, the first fruits of Tahiti? As brave and loving as Timothy was this South Sea Islander, leaping from his boat and swimming through the surf to the shore of Raratonga, bearing nothing but his Tahitian Bible in his hand, to encounter the savage warriors who stood with their uplifted spears to meet him on the beach.

Not to dwell longer on their visitation of the old fields, we must now go northward and westward with the missionaries, where we shall see how—

2. New fields were opened.

Phrygia and Galatia, large provinces north of Lyca-

onia, are traversed by them. There also churches sprang up as the result of their labors (1 Cor. 16:1). At length they turn westward, and the next that we read of them is that they are drawing near to the shore of the Grecian Archipelago. Here were great provinces which might well invite a missionary's footsteps—the northernmost, Bithynia; the central, Mysia; the southern, Asia. Luke seems to employ these geographical terms not in exact accordance with political boundaries, but according to the more popular usage of the day. At a point about a hundred and fifty miles from the coast Paul would stand where the boundaries of these three western provinces met—Bithynia on his right, mountainous, but wealthy and populous, a favorite region with the emperors of Rome; on his left Asia, with its great ports and cities, Ephesus, Sardis, Thyatira, Laodicea, Philadelphia, Smyrna, with vast populations sunken in idolatry and utterly ignorant of the gospel. What a field! And it is just at hand. It is to this province, Asia, they first turn. They will preach Christ in these teeming centres of trade. It seems a well-laid plan, but it is for some unknown reason "forbidden by the Holy Ghost. Paul then turns northward; "he assayed to go into Bithynia." He will cross this snowy range on his right, and reach the flourishing towns beyond on the fertile plains. But again his scheme is frustrated: "The Spirit suffered them not." Mysia also, under the same divine intimations, they are compelled to "pass by." It must have seemed a strange providence involving these repeated changes. What is this unknown plan which God has laid? At length they reach Alexandria Troas, on the sea-coast. It is a great mercantile city. Is this their destination? No. Thus far all their own plans are thwarted, although no doubt those plans were formed with thought and prayer. But they need

not mourn over these disappointments. They are now to see *God's plan disclosed.*

That night there is given to Paul a vision: "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us." Yes, to another continent, to heathen Europe, the seed of the gospel is to be borne. It is to be planted. God shall watch over its growth and spread in those new lands. Then Paul may return and preach in Asia.

It is a circumstance useful for us to notice as we take our leave of this history that even so good a man as Paul, and one so wise, is often *led by God in the dark.* His own plans are found at fault, and are baffled. Uncertainty, perplexity, apparent failure and waste of effort attend him. May it not have been because even he needed such discipline? To God, Paul himself, Paul the Christian, was dearer than Paul the worker. Patient waiting, prayerful dependence, quiet and obedient faith,—these hidden, gentle qualities are as precious in God's sight as what we call more heroic graces. But these God himself can train up within us only in the twilight of life's uncertainties and suspense.

A second lesson is found in Paul's *interpretation of the vision.* That Macedonian phantom called for help. *What help?* Upon the wharf at Troas stood four way-worn travelers, unknown, penniless. What succor had Greece to ask from them? Her commerce had ruffled every sea of that ancient world. She had been the teacher of eloquence, of philosophy and letters to all peoples. Art had cast over all her land a perfect dream of beauty. There never had been a civilization on earth equal to hers, and yet there she lay, in all her civilization, wretched and guilty beyond anything which we are permitted to describe. Her soil offered little hope for the

poor, no asylum for the orphan, no pity for the slave. Civilization had not prevented an almost universal licentiousness. It had opened its libraries and its museums, and it had built beside them splendid amphitheatres for shameless spectacles and for the cruel sport of brutal gladiators.

The ignorant had no faith but a debasing superstition; the educated had no sure faith at all. The prosperous were saying, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." The suffering were steeling themselves in stoicism or their hearts were breaking in despair; and as for the dying, they reached forth into the darkness in vain for any sure hope of life and rest beyond the grave.

What wonder is it that when Paul heard that prayer for help he "*gathered assuredly* that the Lord had called him to preach the *gospel* unto them"!

Give the gospel, first of all, if you would give sure help to any people. All that Europe has to-day, all that America has, better than the despairing paganism which stood and prayed to Paul, is due to that faith which Paul bore to Europe, and which men like him have spread from land to land.

Would you help a fellow-man? Tell him of Christ, that Friend of sinners, in whom are all the treasures not only of pity, but of power.

Would you help your country? See to it that every prairie-village, every settlement among her mines and every lane in her crowded cities, is reached by the gospel.

Would you help this unhappy world? Then hasten in the spirit and the wisdom of Paul to bear the gospel to every Macedonian shore.

THE CONVERSION OF LYDIA.

BY ABBOTT E. KITTREDGE, D. D.

Feb. 10.—Acts 16: 11-24.

IN teaching this lesson a map is indispensable, so that those taught may have an intelligent knowledge of the localities visited by Paul in this missionary journey. Troas was a city of Asia Minor, situated on the coast south of the site of Troy. Paul was twice in Troas (Acts 16: 8, 9; 20: 6; 2 Cor. 2: 12; 2 Tim. 4: 13). Samothracia, or Samothrace, was an island in the north-east part of the Ægean Sea. Its present name is Samandachi. Neapolis was a maritime city of Macedonia, and the seaport of Thrace, on the Strymonic Gulf. By most writers its locality is identified as the site of the present town of Kavalla, now a Turkish possession and ten miles from Philippi. The town is situated on a rocky promontory, with a harbor on the western coast. Philippi was nine miles from the sea, to the north-west of Neapolis, on a plain between the ranges of Pangæus and Hæmus. It was first built by the father of Alexander the Great. In the twelfth verse it is stated that Philippi was "the chief city of that part of Macedonia," but we are not to understand by this that it was the capital, for Amphipolis was the capital of that district, and Thessalonica was the chief city of the whole province. Neither can we interpret these words as signifying merely the historical fact

that it was the first city in that district of Macedonia reached by Paul. A better interpretation is that it was a city of great prominence in that region; and that this was true we know from its ruins, which testify to the wealth and beauty of this ancient city. Philippi was a Roman colony founded by Augustus, and by him its citizens were invested with colonial privileges.

The first fact which impresses us as we study this lesson is that Paul and his companions (who were probably Luke, Silas and Timothy) made no stop either at Samothracia or Neapolis, but hastened on to Philippi. Was there not work to be done for the Master in these places, and were not the souls there as precious as in the more distant city? Most certainly. But God had directed Paul, in a vision, to go into Macedonia, from which place the cry for help had come, and so the apostle obeys the divine orders. The way was prepared in Macedonia by the Holy Spirit; hearts were burdened with sin and were longing for the light, and so there was the assurance of grand success. On reaching the city Paul seeks out the Jewish congregation, for it is the Sabbath day, and therefore he expects to find God's chosen people assembled for public worship. He finds them gathered on the bank of a river "where prayer was wont to be made." There has been a difference of opinion as to what river is here referred to, some supposing that it was the Strymon, others that it was the river Gangas. As the former was at least a mile from the city, it would seem more probable that the latter view is the correct one, the Gangas being a stream which in summer is almost dry, but in the winter is a full and swollen river. But why was this place selected for the Sabbath worship instead of the synagogue? There was probably no synagogue in Philippi, for there were but few Jews in the city, and these

were mostly women, as it was a military post and not a mercantile town. On the river-bank, therefore, they were accustomed to assemble on the Sabbath; and it was a convenient place, since the hands must be washed before engaging in prayer.

From a human standpoint the first view of the field was not very promising to these servants of God who had journeyed a long distance to preach the gospel of Christ. No grand reception awaited them, the great city was unconscious of their presence, and the only audience willing to listen to their words was composed of a few women, who had met for their usual Sabbath prayers. It was surely an insignificant beginning, but Paul was obeying his Lord, who had thought it not beneath his dignity nor a waste of his precious time to converse with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well (John 4:6-27). The harvest in Macedonia was glorious, but the beginnings were small and despised, for these women were probably either Jews or proselytes, and humble in social position.

You will notice that on account of the small congregation no formal address was made, but Paul and his companions *sat down* and in a conversational manner talked with the women, assuming the attitude of teachers rather than that of preachers (Luke 4:20; Acts 13:14).

There was in that group of women one eager listener to the burning words of Paul. Did those words make her eager to listen? No. God had opened her heart by his Spirit. Human zeal and eloquence cannot open the heart to the reception of the glad tidings of the gospel. "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water," but the planting and watering will effect nothing unless God has gone before and prepared the soil. He who had commanded his servants to go into Macedonia had

by his grace made ready this woman's heart, so that Paul had only to pour the gospel light though the open door. Sin has shut human hearts against the truth, and man has no power to draw back the bolts and effect an entrance. There are many earnest preachers whose sermons are rich in truth and eloquently delivered, but while the listeners may be pleased and instructed no spiritual fruits follow, for the Lord has not prepared the way. Many a Sunday-school teacher studies faithfully the lesson and earnestly labors to interest his class, but there are no conversions; no one asks, "What must I do to be saved?" for the teacher has neglected to cry mightily to God for his converting grace. The exalted Christ alone has the key of David (Rev. 3:7).

This woman was from Thyatira, a city in Asia Minor in the district of Lydia. It was a Macedonian city, and this explains the fact that its products were brought to Philippi to be sold. Thyatira was from a very early period celebrated for its purple fabrics and dyes. "The purple color so extravagantly valued by the ancients included many shades or tints, from rose-red to sea-green or blue. Lydia's occupation may have been the sale of the dye itself, procured from a shellfish (*Purpurea murex*), but more probably was that of cloth or clothes dyed with it." She was a business-woman, possessing, very likely, some property, but she did not permit her business to interfere with her religious duties nor so to engross her mind as to crowd out reverential thoughts of God. She was not a converted woman, but was a devout seeker after the truth, like Cornelius, and the grace which Paul preached was like balm to her weary soul. God opened her heart, but Lydia had something to do in order to gain the pearl of great price. First, she had to attend "unto the things which were spoken by Paul." A listening ear

is necessary if one would find salvation. Second, she had to believe in Christ as the risen Messiah. Many listen to the glad news, and are impressed and almost persuaded, but faith must follow knowledge. We must have, besides the listening ear, the believing look to the Lamb of God. "Look unto me, and be ye saved;" "He that believeth hath everlasting life."

Verse 15 : The two prominent facts in this verse are—

(1.) The baptism of Lydia and her household; (2.) Her hospitality, shown to the apostle and his co-laborers.

This baptism may not have taken place immediately after Lydia's conversion, but the natural inference is that it occurred very soon, and perhaps on the same day. By this rite she publicly confessed her faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and became a member of his visible Church. She did not defer this step in order to become more fit by growth in grace, for we do not profess our own fitness by this act, but simply confess the worthiness of our Lord and our faith in his atonement. Neither did she hesitate for fear that she might not hold out, for she had placed herself in the divine keeping and trusted in His promise who was able to keep her from falling. Paul did not hesitate to receive this converted woman, although her knowledge of the great truths of redemption must have been very limited; but she believed in Christ, and was saved through his grace, and so she was a proper candidate for baptism and church-membership. We have no right to demand from those who desire to join the Church an assent to all the doctrines of the Creed, and the only question should be, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your almighty Saviour from sin and its guilt?" Therefore, little children may be, and should be, received into the visible fold as soon

as they give evidence of having been born again by the Holy Spirit.

We are told that the household of Lydia were baptized with her. Two questions may be asked you by your scholars on this point. First, Was this rite of baptism administered by sprinkling or by immersion? The wise answer will be that, as we are not informed, it may have been in either of these modes. But supposing that Lydia was immersed, there is in this fact no argument for immersion as the *only* divinely-established mode of baptism. The position of the Presbyterian Church on this subject is that the Bible does not lay down any law as to the amount of water to be used in baptism, and therefore *any* mode of administering this rite is proper. We adopt the mode of sprinkling because it is the simplest form, and is a perfect expression or sign of the inward change in conversion. The second question may be, Do we find in the fact that the *household* of Lydia were baptized an argument in favor of infant baptism? I answer that this sacrament, so dear to the Church, does not rest upon this statement and the other regarding the jailer's household, in the same chapter, as evidence which would by themselves prove the doctrine; but with other evidences these statements have great weight in establishing the fact that as, under the Jewish dispensation, children were received by circumcision into the fold of Israel, so under the new dispensation children were baptized with believing parents, and thus became the recipients of the covenant promises. Alexander says: "The real strength of the argument (that as households include children we have no right to except them from the general statement) lies not in any one case, but in the repeated mention of whole houses as baptized." Bengel says: "Who can believe that not one infant was found in all these fami-

lies, and that Jews accustomed to the circumcision, and Gentiles accustomed to the lustration of infants, should not also have brought *them* to baptism?" Alford says: "The practice of infant baptism does not rest on inference, but on the continuity and identity of the covenant of grace to Jew and Christian, the sign only of admission being altered."

The hospitality of Lydia in urging Paul and his friends to be her guests was the first fruit of her new spiritual life. Because she loved the Saviour she loved his friends and found pleasure in showing them kindness. Again, in this way she could do something to express her gratitude to her Saviour, for by acts of kindness to those who were his representatives she was really doing it for Jesus, who had said, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." Another motive in this hospitality was, probably, that she was conscious of her ignorance of spiritual truth, and she longed to be instructed by those who had a richer personal experience. Lydia was not a poor woman as regards the riches of the world, and possibly was possessed of large means, so that she was able to be hospitable, and her love to Christ impelled her urgently to press her invitation. The word here rendered "constrained" is the same word as we find in Luke 24:29, and signifies an urgent opportunity.

Before passing to the second division of this lesson, which relates to the violent arrest and imprisonment of Paul and Silas, notice these practical thoughts on the verses already studied.

(I.) Our path of usefulness is sure to be found as we are directed by the Holy Spirit. It is not enough to have a mind to work and zeal for our work, but we must look up for the divine direction *where* to work. And the

Master is always ready to point out the way if we go to him in faith, leaving the whole question to his wisdom.

(2.) When we walk on believing on God's appointed way we may always be sure that he will go before us by his Spirit and open human hearts for the reception of our message.

(3.) The beginnings may be small and seemingly insignificant, but the harvest will be large and glorious.

(4.) Great audiences may flatter pride, but one converted soul makes joy among the angels.

(5.) Confession of Christ must follow faith in Christ. If by uniting with the Church we made "a *profession* of religion," one might well hesitate, for the young convert has but little religion to profess, but the weakest spiritual babe can *confess* Christ.

(6.) The new life will manifest itself in outward acts, especially in love for Christ's disciples.

(7.) We must not rest satisfied with our own salvation, but must labor and pray to bring our children into the fold of the dear Shepherd. Household piety is not only a beautiful picture, but it is the hope of our country for the future.

Verses 16-18: The apostle Paul now comes into conflict with heathenism as represented in this female slave, who was possessed with an evil spirit of soothsaying. The words "possessed with a spirit of divination" would read, literally, "having the spirit of a pythoness;" that is, a diviner who had received the gift of prophecy from Apollo, who was said to have killed the serpent Python at Delphi. This woman was really a demoniac, but she was owned by a joint company who reaped a financial profit from her soothsaying acts. On more than one occasion this woman had followed Paul and his compan-

ions, crying loudly that they were the servants of the most high God who showed the way of salvation. Was she simply repeating what she had heard others say, or did she by a supernatural revelation testify the truth? The latter view is probably the correct one. (See Matt. 8:29; Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41; 8:28.) Paul could accept no recommendation or support from any spirit which was not of God, and so on one occasion he turns suddenly and commands the evil spirit to come out of the woman, and the devil was cast out immediately.

Verses 19-21: The anger of those who owned this slave and who saw that she had been restored to her right mind, was excited against Paul and Silas, for all hope of any further gains from the poor girl was taken away. Self-interest impels them to seek revenge, and they seize Paul and Silas and drag them into the market-place before the magistrates of the city. They do not dare to state the true cause of their anger, for Roman law provided no remedy for persons whose property had depreciated through exorcism. They fabricate, therefore, a false charge, which was that these men, being Jews, had attempted to introduce customs which were opposed to Roman customs, and that in consequence disturbances had followed, endangering the peace of the city.

Verses 22-24: An excited multitude quickly assembled and joined with the owners of the slave in abuse of the prisoners, for these owners were probably men of wealth and position, and then the crowd who gathered around Paul and Silas were all Romans, and it was enough for them to know that the accused were Jews, the despised portion of the population of Philippi. The very name of Jew was at that time a term of reproach. The law

permitted foreigners to practice their own forms of religious worship, but forbade Romans to forsake their own faith, and Judaism had been specially interdicted. Neander says: "It was a *religio licita* for the Jews, but they were by no means allowed to propagate their religion among the Roman pagans; the laws expressly forbade the latter, under severe penalties, to receive circumcision. It was the case, indeed, at this time that the number of proselytes from the pagans was greatly multiplied. This the public authorities sometimes allowed to pass unnoticed, but occasionally severe laws were passed anew to repress the evil." It is noticeable that Paul and Silas were arraigned not as Christians, but as Jews, for the citizens of Philippi knew no distinction between Judaism and Christianity; but, in reality, this was a collision between the gospel and paganism, and the persecution now visited on Paul was the beginning of a long series of persecutions which the Roman power inflicted on the Church during the first three centuries. The magistrates were only too glad to obey the voice of the mob, and so, without any judicial process, they stripped Paul and Silas naked and beat them with rods. The Jewish law mercifully limited such punishment to "forty blows save one" (Deut. 25: 3), but in Roman law there was no restriction. No protest was made by any as these two witnesses for Christ were beaten until they were covered with blood and the lictors were weary. Then they were committed to the care of the jailer, who simply obeyed instructions and consigned them to a cell in the interior of the prison, fastening their feet in the stocks. This was an instrument of torture by which the limbs were distended, so as to cause great pain.

Poor Paul and Silas! So we should have said had we seen them thrust violently into that inner prison, their

backs covered with blood and their feet held fast in the stocks. Was it for this that they had been directed to go down into Macedonia, to be beaten and to die a terrible death? Ah! the same Lord who was with Joseph in the prison of Pharaoh was with these two noble, fearless confessors. *He* comforted them, and grace sufficient was poured into their souls. They could not see the glorious results which were to come at midnight, but they knew that they were in the path of God's will, and they trusted confidently and joyfully in his care and love. As Tertullian says, "The limbs do not feel the stocks when the heart is in heaven."

God's ways may seem to our poor vision dark and perilous, but they always tend upward and end in triumph, and when the darkness is the densest the morning is close at hand. And not only is this true, but those very events which seem to be the most disastrous are the steps upon which the Church rises to a greater power and a grander success. It was through this very persecution that the gospel was to reach the heathenism of Philippi, and the bleeding bodies of Paul and Silas and the prison with its painful stocks were to be the foundations upon which a Christian church was to be built up.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning Providence
He shows a smiling face."

THE CONVERSION OF THE JAILER.

BY REV. A. W. PITZER, D. D.

Feb. 17.—Acts 16:15-40.

FROM Troas, on the western coast of Mysia, the apostle to the Gentile world beheld the midnight vision of the man of Macedon standing on the European coast and beseeching him to cross over the Ægean Sea and bring to the Greeks the gospel of Christ. Prompt to obey the heavenly voice, in company with Silas he sailed immediately to bear the glad tidings to the regions beyond.

Outside the gate of historic Philippi, in a place of prayer by the river-side, to a company of women, the apostle Paul preached Christ crucified; and the word found its first lodgment and Christ his first home in Europe in the divinely-opened heart of a tradeswoman, one Lydia of Thyatira. From that small seed have grown in Europe, America and the isles of the ocean the Christian harvests of eighteen centuries, that have made glad the city of our God.

This woman and her family were baptized into the name of the Lord, and his Church and ministers found in her house a Christian home. These, like other believers of that day, continued steadfastly in Scripture teaching and Christian worship; and so it came to pass on a certain day, as the missionaries went to the place of prayer, a maid possessed with a demon met them and

bore testimony that these men were the servants of the most high God.

As, during the earthly life of our Lord, when the kingdom of darkness trembled beneath the blows of Him who had come to destroy the works of the devil, the evil spirits of the unseen realm, cast out from their human habitation, cried aloud that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of the living and most high God, so here again these spirits recognize him in the person and work of his servants.

This is no insane woman uttering incoherent ravings, but a female slave possessed of an evil spirit, and because of this possession and power bringing to her masters much gain by her divinations. For many days she followed Paul and Silas, declaring that these men were the servants of the most high God.

As one of the functions of his Messianic office the Lord Christ cast out many demons. In Gadara, at Capernaum, near the Mount of Transfiguration and at other places in the Holy Land he cast out evil spirits from the bodies and souls of their human victims; and this power he had expressly promised to his believing followers.

When for many days this heathen damsel followed Paul uttering her demoniacal cries, sore troubled and unwilling to have testimony borne to him as Christ's servant by a demon, he turned and said to the spirit, "I charge thee in the name of Christ to come out of her;" and straightway at hearing that name the demon departed from her. But with his departure the masters' income from the prophesyings of their slave also ceased. Maddened by this loss of their living, they laid hold of Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market-place to have them tried and punished by the Roman praetors.

The same gospel that brought healing to the slave inflicted loss upon her masters by depriving them of their unholy gains from her soothsayings, and the hatred of their hearts was aroused against the messengers of the Most High.

The persecution that arose in Jerusalem and Judea against Christ and his Church is now to break forth for the first time in the Gentile world in this colonial city of the Roman empire. As not only the people of Israel, but the Gentiles also, were gathered together against God's holy Servant Jesus, so now the moment the power of this same Jesus touches the selfishness of heathen men they too rise up in rage to persecute the ministers and servants of the Lord.

In Jerusalem, before the Sanhedrim, the charge against Christ and his servants was blasphemy against God and the holy place; in Philippi, before the prætors, the charge was teaching customs opposed to the polity of the Roman empire: "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive or to observe, being Romans."

Among the Jews hatred of the gospel assumes a religious form—among the Gentiles it takes political shape. But at Jerusalem with the Jews, and at Philippi with the heathen, it is the same enmity of the carnal mind against God—the hatred of the human heart inflamed by the devil, whose kingdom is shaking to its fall under the assaults of the Son of man, the woman's promised Seed. When Satan and self-love possess a human soul there is no enormity of wicked persecution of Christ and his Church at which it will for one moment hesitate.

Alas for the missionaries of the cross when the gospel they proclaim touches the pocket, whether of Jew or Gentile, Christian or heathen! A gospel that destroys

unholy gains is always hated and persecuted. So the heathen multitude took the part of the slave's masters against the Jewish strangers who had troubled the city and injured its business.

The magistrates were eager to punish these disturbers of the city's peace, and with their own hands rent off the garments of Paul and Silas, and commanded the lictors to beat them with the cruel scourge. These officials did their bloody and infamous work with a devilish delight, for they laid many stripes on them and delivered them over to the jailer with orders to keep them safely. Of the Jews five times did this illustrious apostle receive forty stripes, less one, and thrice was he beaten with rods and many stripes. The jailer received his bleeding prisoners, thrust them into the lowest cell of the dungeon and made their feet fast in the stocks.

In the Pantheon at Rome there were lords many and gods many, but no place for the Christ of God; and this first Gentile persecution is imperial and cultured Rome's reception of the gospel—a prelude and a type of the treatment the Church is to receive for the next three hundred years from this colossus of heathendom.

In the Philippian jail that night strange sounds were heard and strange events came to pass. At midnight voices of prayer and praise came from the inner prison, where the two scourged Jews were confined with feet made fast in the stocks: Roman rods have proved powerless to seal their lips and Roman bands powerless to bind their spirits.

The two men are actually rejoicing in tribulation, and praising God that they are counted worthy to suffer for the name of their Lord Jesus. A third One is with them there, even He who promised to be with them always. Far mightier than the august emperor of Rome is the

One who is present with Paul and Silas in this Philip-pian jail, and soon his power is to be so signally manifested that proud prætors shall come in person and give honorable release to these servants of the most high God.

While the other prisoners listen to the voices of prayer and praise, suddenly a great earthquake shakes the prison, and every door is opened and every band is loosened; a supernatural force is at work in the jail; a divine hand, moved by a divine will, is giving palpable and conclusive evidence to all the inmates of the presence of a personal God who is quick to hear and strong to succor his servants. As in Jerusalem the prison-door had opened for the release of Peter, the apostle to the Jews, so in Philippi at the touch of the same divine hand the door of the dungeon opened for the deliverance of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. God himself is bearing witness to his messengers and message with signs and wonders and manifold power. The structure and style of the narrative most loudly proclaim the supernatural character of these strange events.

The sound and the shock aroused the sleeping jailer, who, seeing the doors opened, and supposing that the prisoners had escaped, drew his sword to kill himself; but hearing Paul's loud voice, "We are all here," he desisted from his purpose, and, calling for lights, came trembling with fear and fell down before Paul and Silas, and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

This Roman official did not ask what he must do to be saved from the consequences of his neglect of duty, for there had been no dereliction whatever; the prisoners were all present and the jail was uninjured: the earthquake had opened the doors and loosed the bands, but did not harm the building. His question was far different and of deeper import than this. He was face to face

with the living God, with an untimely death and with the retributions of an undone eternity. The same Jesus who some years before had said to one of these two prisoners, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" is now asking of this jailer the same solemn and piercing question; the Holy Spirit is convincing him of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; he is feeling in his own terrified experience what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God; his brutish soul has been startled from its sleep of sin and the pains of hell have gotten hold of him; his conscience, quickened at last by the Spirit of the Lord, is burdened with guilt in the presence of a holy God. God and death and retribution and eternity are all pressing upon him with infinite urgency. In the presence of God he is convicted of sin; his conscience condemns him, and from his agonized heart there bursts forth the question, "What must I do to be saved?"—to be saved from guilt and death and an eternal hell?

Doubtless, he knew that these men had proclaimed salvation in the name of Jesus to lost and guilty men, and so he came to them for instruction. The miracle startled, but it did not convert, the jailer; it was the material sign of a supernatural spiritual presence; it aroused his attention and excited his fears, but it did not, and could not, convert his soul. As the signs and wonders of Pentecost had caused the sinners of Jerusalem to cry out, so here in this heathen city the "signs and wonders" produced the same result: "Sirs, what must we do to be saved?" This question, in some form and manner, every convicted sinner must and will ask: "What must I do to be saved?"

The members of the jailer's family gathered with him around the Jewish prisoners; they too had interest in the apostle's answer to the question; and so he recognized

their presence and includes them in his reply: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. The promise is no less to thy wife and children and servants than to thee, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The one thing which he must do was to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This was Peter's gospel in Jerusalem, and Philip's in Samaria, and Paul's in Philippi; and it is the true and only gospel for all ages and lands and peoples until time shall be no more. This gospel was the power of God unto salvation from Abel to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to David, from David to Paul, from Paul onward for ever. Neither is there any other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. A stumbling-block it may be to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, but to all who are called it is the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation.

The same Jesus who saved Saul of Tarsus is able also to save Paul's Philippian jailer; the same Jesus who gave repentance and remission to Jerusalem sinners is able and willing to give salvation also to this trembling and penitent heathen. To this man and to all the members of his household the issues of eternal life or eternal death hang suspended on the single and simple condition of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Go ye into all the world," said the Saviour to his disciples, "and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;" "Without faith it is impossible to please him."

It is no arbitrary decree of God that has conditioned the salvation of men upon their belief in his Son Jesus Christ, since confidence in God must be the foundation of fellowship between man and his Maker, between the

sinner and his Saviour. If, then, the jailer would be saved, he must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We must not suppose that Paul gave this answer to the jailer's question, and said nothing more, as if this newly-convicted heathen could at once by intuition grasp the truth, and needed no further instruction. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; and so it is written, "They spake the word of the Lord unto him and all that were in his house."

The faith of the gospel is not blind credulity, but intelligent conviction, founded in every case upon proper and sufficient evidence. Confidence in Christ is the most eminently rational act the soul of man ever performs. It is a believable and true saying, worthy of every man's acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

We know enough of Paul's method of teaching to be certain that he set forth in order the fundamental facts and truths concerning the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and thus presented the historic and risen Christ as the only and all-sufficient Saviour, the proper object of the sinner's faith—a present Redeemer, able and willing to save this man and all his house if they would only confide in him.

The jailer not only listened, but he believed—not only assented to the truths proclaimed, but confided in the Person presented: he trusted the power of Jesus that shook the prison, and confided in the love that saved Paul. His whole heart went forth in confidence and love to his new-found Friend and Lord, in whom he rejoiced as a present, personal, loving, all-sufficient Saviour. Christ had been presented to him in this character and capacity, and as such he accepted and confided in him: this is the faith that saves—not assent to a dogma, but trust in a

Person. Paul did not say to the jailer, "Believe in my creed, my confession, my Church, my sect, my sacraments, my ritual;" but, "Trust this living, loving, almighty Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Saving faith is never alone; it is a principle of life in the renewed soul, and must be, and always is, attended by appropriate Christian works. Faith without works is dead; faith in Christ impels to works for Christ. Mark how this man's faith wrought with his works, and how by works was his faith made perfect! Faith in Christ Jesus prompted him to relieve the sufferings of the servants of that Lord, no longer now strangers and foreigners, but brethren beloved in Christ and for his sake. To do good to others, especially to the household of faith, is one of the first impulses of the renewed soul; and the jailer proceeded at once to minister to the needs of the suffering servants of the Lord.

The presence and use of water in washing their stripes suggested baptism; and what did hinder that believing household, at that very hour and in that very place, to be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus? There is no hint that they went out of the jail to find deep running water, either the Gaggitas or the Strymon, to search for pond or pool; nor were the jails of the Roman empire furnished with pools or baths for the immersion of adults, or even well-grown infants. No human ingenuity can prove that this baptism was by immersion. All the facts recorded and all the circumstances of the case are in conflict with such a supposition. They were baptized with water, not in water—clean water brought in some convenient vessel, possibly the one that had been used, and applied to the subjects by pouring or sprink-

ling in the name of the Lord—a holy rite appointed by Christ to sign and seal the new birth and ingrafting of his believing followers into himself; not a saving but a sealing obedience, whereby the baptized are recognized as members of the Church of Christ. First, belief; then baptism as its sign and seal—a divinely-appointed ordinance which no believer may lightly esteem or neglect.

The jailer and his household, thus signed and sealed unto Christ in baptism, proceeded with Paul and Silas into the dwelling part of the prison, and while the weary prisoners partook of food the jailer and all his house rejoiced greatly, having believed in God—a joy such as had never before been experienced in that habitation, such as no heart ever feels until Christ enters in.

On the morrow the magistrates gave the prisoners honorable discharge, and when these had seen Lydia and comforted the brethren they went on their way to proclaim the glad tidings in other Gentile cities.

Thus in the hearts and households of two converts, a tradeswoman of Thyatira and a prison-keeper of Philippi, was the Church of the Lord Christ organized and established on the continent of Europe; and while the great battle that decided the destiny of the Roman republic, fought at this city of Philippi less than fifty years before the apostle was born, has faded from the memories of men or is known only to the few, increasing thousands of every nation and tongue are daily reading in their own languages the inspired record of these humble but germinal events so fruitful in blessings to the race.

THESSALONIANS AND BEREANS.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL J. NICCOLLS, D.D.

Feb. 24.—Acts 17: 1-14.

THIS passage forms part of the history of a most wonderful missionary enterprise by which the gospel was planted in Europe. Paul and his three companions, crossing over from Asia, had first preached at Philippi. After some time their work in that city was hindered, and bitter persecution compelled at least two of this little band, Paul and Silas, to seek a new field of labor. Following the course of the great Roman road which led through Greece, they passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, and came to Thessalonica, one hundred miles from Philippi. Thessalonica was the chief city of the rich and populous province of Macedonia, a centre alike for trade, culture and political power. Paul, like a wise commander, determined to occupy it as a strategic point, in the conviction that a church planted there would speedily spread the knowledge of the gospel far and wide. His wisdom in selecting this place as his next field of labor was fully justified by the results. In his first letter to the church founded in this city he writes: "From you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad."

There was another reason which doubtless had its influence with Paul in deciding him to tarry in Thessalonica. There was a certain preparation in it for the reception of the gospel. A large number of Jews had been attracted to it by its flourishing trade; they had built a synagogue, and "not a few" Greeks, both men and women, were joined with them as proselytes. Among these Jews was a kinsman of Paul, one Jason, who subsequently became a Christian, and at whose house Paul and Silas lodged for a time. Such was the field which the apostle entered to found the second church of Europe.

We are not informed how long Paul remained in Thessalonica. For three weeks he preached in the synagogue to the Jews, and after this to the Gentiles, from whom he gathered the larger part of the converts. It is altogether probable that his stay lasted two or three months. But, short as it was comparatively, it was a period of intense activity and incessant labor to the apostle. From the two Epistles which he wrote to the Thessalonians some months later we can gather much both as to the character and manner of his ministry while with them. It was here that he practiced the trade which he had learned when a boy in Tarsus, in order that he might not be burdensome to the brethren, and at the same time set an example to certain idlers who were disposed to depend upon the charity of others for their support. Here also he carried on his work in the gospel through many afflictions and painful struggles. From the brief account here given of his ministry in this city, and also from his letters to the Thessalonian church, we can easily see—

First: The subject-matter of his teaching and the manner in which he taught. As his custom was from the beginning of his ministry, he went into the synagogue, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with the Jews

out of the Old-Testament Scriptures in order to present their testimony concerning the promised Messiah. His countrymen were everywhere, upon the authority of the word of God, looking for a Messiah who should come to deliver Israel and reign in great glory. But they strangely overlooked the testimony of the Scriptures to his sufferings and death. This was the new view which Paul specially set before them in the synagogue. He "opened" the word, as though it had been a casket, in order that they might see the truth which it had always held like a precious jewel. He had no difficulty in finding the doctrine of the atonement in the Old Testament. Its types and sacrifices and prophetic testimonies all pointed to a suffering Saviour, who should die for the sins of his people and be raised again for their justification.

It was precisely the same course that Christ himself followed with his disciples when he would remove their doubts and establish their faith after his resurrection: "Then said he unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" If the Scriptures, which they received as the infallible word of God, were fulfilled, it must needs be that the promised Messiah should suffer and die, and rise again from the dead. Then came the apostle's testimony: "Jesus, whom I preach to you, and who was crucified at Jerusalem, and who rose again from the dead, is the Christ." Paul sought to gain the faith of his hearers, not by working miracles, but by presenting that divine testimony to Jesus Christ which is contained in the Scriptures. The ground and warrants for our faith are to be found in the word of God. So it is written, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." It is one thing to reason with unbelieving men *about* the

Scriptures, but another and a more important matter to reason with them, as did Paul, *out of* the Scriptures. Opening the Scriptures to men so that they shall see clearly Christ crucified for their sins and raised again for their justification is the true and only method of teaching so as to produce saving faith. The one object of saving faith, which is the Lamb of God, must be presented to the soul in order to create faith.

Second: This lesson shows us the twofold results of the apostle's preaching. "Some of them"—that is, of the Jews—"believed," and openly avowed their faith by joining themselves with Paul and Silas. More, however, of the "devout Greeks"—that is, of the proselytes—believed, and especially "of the chief women not a few." It is very suggestive to observe that in the account of the establishment of the Church in Europe particular mention is made of the fact that women are among the converts. Christianity brought a new day and a glorious deliverance for womanhood. In addition to these converts from the adherents of the synagogue there was a still larger ingathering from the Gentiles. Many "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead."

We have also the apostolic testimony to the power of the word preached, as seen in the changed lives of those who believed. He writes: "We give thanks to God always for you, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ; for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with

joy of the Holy Ghost; so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia" (1 Thess. 1:2-8). Such were the joyful and sanctifying effects of the word of God when it was honestly received and obeyed; and such miracles of transformation it can still work.

With others the preaching of Paul had an opposite effect. Instead of being to them "a savor of life unto life," it was that of "death unto death." It stirred up their hatred and envy; it moved them to deeds of violence and to the spreading abroad of wicked calumnies. Prejudice, pride, self-righteousness, carnal desire, bigotry and religious fanaticism make a dreadful audience for the faithful preacher of the gospel. They are certain to go out to plot for his overthrow and to lie about his doctrine.

We read concerning the Jews which believed not that "they took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason [where Paul and Silas were lodging], and sought to bring them out to the people." Their conduct reveals their character. First, their baseness is revealed by their unreasonableness. Paul reasoned with them out of their own Scriptures; he affirmed that the word of God was on his side. As reasonable men they should have answered his arguments or else admitted the truth of what he taught. But instead they let passion and prejudice control them, and raised a mob against him. Beaten in arguments, they resorted to violence. They were determined not to yield to the truth, even though it was in the inspired word of God. Next, we see their bigotry and fanaticism. They were "moved with envy" because so many of the Gentiles believed. It gave them no joy to see multitudes turning "to God from idols to serve the living

and true God." All they cared for was their own synagogue. Paul was teaching the godless and licentious Gentiles to walk "holily," "justly," "unblameably" and "worthy of God;" and yet they were filled with rage and denounced him as a public enemy. They said, "These that have turned the world upside down, have come hither also." The charge which they meant as a reproach was indeed true in a better sense. The gospel is revolutionary in its character. It comes to turn the world upside down in order that it may set it right side up. Its teachings and precepts are the very opposite of those of the world. Take, for example, the great principles of Christ's kingdom as set forth in the Beatitudes, and what a turning upside down of the ways of the world would their general application to human conduct produce! It reveals a most malignant and ignoble condition of mind when the success of the gospel enrages men.

Third : We see how unprincipled and base these unbelievers were, in that they lied about the apostle and his doctrine.

They asserted that he was disloyal to Cæsar, and was fomenting a rebellion by preaching that "there was another king, one Jesus." Such a statement was especially calculated to produce a great excitement in Thessalonica, for it was one of the free cities of the Roman empire, and any suspicion of disloyalty attaching to it would have caused the taking away of its privileges by the imperial power. It was the charge of all others that would soonest array the rulers of the city against these missionaries of the cross, and cause their expulsion. This charge was not proven, for even the city magistrates could see that it was a gross misrepresentation of the preaching of Paul and Silas. But the general excitement produced by it was so great that Jason and his

friends were compelled to give bail to keep the peace, and so, in order to prevent further riots, Paul and Silas were sent away by night. Doubtless, these unbelievers rejoiced in the success of their evil policy, but, as their conduct stands revealed in the light of the centuries, who would wish to be in fellowship with them? Their judgment is written. They show themselves to be unreasonable, prejudiced, evil-disposed and false to the claims of truth. And yet there are men to whom the same gospel is offered and the same proofs presented that Paul proclaimed, and they will not believe.

In striking contrast with this is the account which follows of a different class of hearers. About sixty miles west of Thessalonica was the city of Berea. Thither the two persecuted but undaunted missionaries made their way, and again, according to Paul's custom, went into the synagogue. In one respect, at least, it was a repetition of the scene in the synagogue at Thessalonica. There was the same sermon, the same reasoning out of the Scriptures, and the same statement "that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead." But in another respect it was strikingly different. The Jews there "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so." Here were hearers open to reason, eager to know the truth, and willing to search the word of God and abide by its decision. For all time the commendation of the Holy Ghost is sealed upon them. Their patent of nobility is beyond dispute. They "were more noble than those in Thessalonica." This manner of expression does not imply that there was some degree of nobility in the latter. According to the idiom of the

Greek language it simply asserts a comparison in which all the nobleness belongs to the Bereans.

It is well that we should know the marks of a noble hearer of the gospel as he is measured by the Holy Ghost. True nobility in this respect is not something determined by rank, dress, wealth, intelligence or culture. It belongs to the soul. The disposition a man has toward the claims of holiness, truth, purity, love and righteousness furnishes the index to the nobility of his soul. These noble Bereans were, first of all, unprejudiced. They showed themselves to be genuine seekers after truth, in that "they received the word with all readiness of mind." They were willing and attentive listeners. There is often a strange indifference to be found in many who are accustomed to hear the gospel preached from Sabbath to Sabbath, which acts as an effectual barrier to the entrance of the truth. Prejudice or worldliness, like some hard dry crust over the soil, prevents the reception of the good seed of the word. Certainly, such a condition of mind is to the dishonor of the hearer. The statements of the gospel are so profoundly important that they deserve a fair, honest and attentive consideration at our hands; and when men, on one pretext or another, refuse to give it, they display an ignoble spirit. If, while some one was speaking of the imminent peril of his country and the true method of deliverance, there should be found among his hearers a man not only utterly indifferent to the message, but at the same time manifesting great anxiety about procuring some dainty food or a certain new style of dress, would not he be judged by all as an ignoble soul? Such trifling in view of such great issues is unworthy of a man. Yet how many hear the gospel message concerning a greater ruin and a greater deliverance, and never raise their thoughts above the trifling and transitory affairs of

time! Or if the truth is more urgently pressed upon their attention, they become indignant and take sides against it.

It is a good sign when men show a readiness to consider the claims of the gospel. Such was the spirit manifested by the Bereans. Their nobleness was also revealed in another way: "They searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so." Some minds are exceedingly impressible. Like lakes lying open to every wind that blows from any quarter, they respond to the last doctrine preached to them. They are never fixed and settled in their convictions. But these Bereans had an unchanging and infallible standard of truth—the Scriptures. Like wise men they acted in accordance with the direction which Christ gave to his countrymen: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." Instead of answering the arguments of the apostle with indifference or persecution, they examined for themselves whether he spoke according to the testimony of prophecy or not.

The fact that they did this "daily" showed their profound interest. The gospel does not appeal to our ignorance nor demand a blind, unreasoning faith, nor yet are we called upon to believe on the authority of the Church or of preachers and teachers. The revealed word of God is for every man, that he may search it and consider its testimony. Unlike the Romish Church, the Holy Ghost encourages the examination of the Scriptures on the part of those who hear. A genuine spirit of inquiry is not opposed by the word of God. By it we must try every doctrine that we hear, and if it is contrary to its testimony we must reject it. "Beloved," writes John, "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God." The Bereans showed their nobleness by their loyalty to the truth.

III. The result of their investigation is briefly recorded: "Therefore many of them believed; also honorable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few."

This was to be expected, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Not only then, but ever since, the careful, honest and prayerful study of the Scriptures has brought multitudes to the full and clear persuasion of the truth of the gospel. If men would be rid of their doubts and brought into the clear light of saving truth, let them come to the word of God and search it honestly and reverently. Let them manifest a noble spirit in hearing and obeying its precepts, and they will not be wanting in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The rule which is to be drawn from the commendation of the course of the Bereans has a double application. Its observance would undoubtedly increase the number of believers. It might also cause the vacating of many pulpits in these days. It was an apostle who preached, yet the Holy Ghost commends the conduct of the Bereans in testing his doctrine by the Scriptures before they received it. No matter with what pretence of authority or with what eloquence or plausibility a man teaches, his ministry is to be rejected if it does not accord with the Scriptures. A popular preacher may have a childish and ignoble people, because they refuse to test his doctrine by the only infallible standard, the word of God. Instead of being the free men of truth, they are the slaves of a man.

PAUL AT ATHENS.

BY THE REV. MOSES D. HOGE, D. D.

March 2.—Acts 17: 22-31.

IN this chapter we have an account of the meeting of the theism of Palestine with the polytheism of Greece—of the first contact of Christianity with pagan civilization in its most classic capital. It is a chapter full of stir and spectacle, with its picturesque grouping of men of different schools and nationalities, with its festive throngs of light-hearted and mercurial citizens swarming in the Agora, intent on what Gibbon calls their “cheerful devotion;” with its long lines of streets adorned with shrines and statues, and as a background to the whole the temple-crowned heights of the Areopagus and the Acropolis. All this is like the unrolling of a splendid panorama, and fills the chapter with a dramatic interest equal to some vivid narrative of Thucydides or the “painted page” of Livy.

“On the *Æ*gean shore a city stands,
Built nobly, pure the air and light the soil—
Athens, mother of arts and eloquence.”

To this city Paul was conducted by his friends. Entering first into the synagogue of his own people, he reasoned with his Hebrew brethren. We may judge of the tenor of his argument by the tender and earnest words used at another time, which give us the keynote

of his sympathy with his countrymen: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Next, he went into the market-place, where certain philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoics encountered him, and where some of his hearers were sufficiently impressed to desire to know more of the "new doctrine;" and accordingly he was conducted to the Areopagus, as a more appropriate place for the continuance of the discussion than the noisy Agora.

Thus he gained the opportunity for the delivery of one of the most remarkable discourses on record—a discourse which, beginning with premises admitted by his hearers, enabled him to rise by degrees from the truths of natural to those of revealed religion, setting forth the true character of God and his relations both to the material and the immaterial world; a discourse embracing in its range the creation and final judgment of the world, containing principles adapted to antagonize not only existing errors, but all that might arise in coming times; a discourse so conciliatory in its tone, so faultless in its unity, so admirable in its development, so replete with the facts which underlie all theology, as to give it a place among the noblest ever delivered on that memorable spot, which had so often resounded with the most eloquent voices of the world.

When he begins with the familiar words, "Ye men of Athens," even now, at this distance of place and time, they recall to mind the renowned orators who had so often solicited the attention of their countrymen by the phrase. The echo of the voice of Demosthenes in his oration On the Crown comes back to us, and the echo also of the voices of a long line of illustrious men whose patriotic appeals had so often moved the men of Athens as the forest is shaken by a mighty wind.

His whole exordium was characterized by consummate tact and courtesy. Nothing could have been more conciliating than his opening assurance: "I perceive that in all things ye are surpassingly devout"—a statement marred in our translation by the unfortunate introduction of the word "superstitious." The apostle would not excite the prejudice of his hearers at the outset by the use of an offensive epithet, nor would he flatter them nor commend the worth of their worship, but he recognizes the characteristic fact that the Athenians surpassed others in their reverence for their gods; and then he illustrates his meaning, and at the same time opens the way for the enforcement of a nobler worship, by saying, "As I passed along and observed the objects of your devotion, I found also an altar with the inscription, 'To the unknown God.' " What an advantage this fact gave him for the announcement which follows!—"Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

That nameless altar, so void and desolate, gave him the opportunity to reveal the character and vindicate the claims of the God who has made himself known in revelation. The very emptiness of the human heart is an argument for the acknowledgment of One who can fill and satisfy it; and the significant fact that the thirty thousand gods worshiped in Athens left room for another, whom they called the "Unknown," gave him his vantage-ground when he proceeded to declare, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life and breath and all things." Then God may be known both in his relation to Nature and to man.

These words, "God . . . made the world," are simple

enough, but we lose their deep significance if we do not remember that this truth, familiar even to the children in the infant classes of our Sabbath-schools, was a novelty to these Athenians. They believed that matter was eternal, and that its atoms were rolled into worlds by forces moved by chance. But the new doctrine which the apostle taught, contrary to the belief of both Epicureans and Stoics, was, that the atoms themselves, the very matter of the universe, was *created*, made by the word of God out of nothing—a truth never taught nor discovered by any pagan school of antiquity. There were no original germs awaiting development through inherent forces residing in them; God was the sole original of all. Here was the true cosmogony.

But the apostle adds, “Seeing he is Lord of heaven and earth, he dwelleth not in temples made with hands”—not in the sense that he did not dwell by his spiritual presence in the ancient temple erected and dedicated to his service, but in the sense that he cannot be *localized* or circumscribed by hand-built walls. He fills immensity with his presence; heaven itself is but his throne. And so independent is he as sovereign Lord that the ministries of men, their gifts and adorations, add nothing to his essential glory. He does not sit in the heavens to receive augmentation of his blessedness, but as the *Giver* of “life and breath and all things;” and not only so, but to “determine the times,” to order the events which mark new eras in human history, and to designate all the boundaries of the nations of the earth. Then he is the God of providence, regulating the tides of emigration in every ebb and flow, ordering the rise and fall of kingdoms, and allotting to individual men their habitations on all the face of the earth.

Nor do his relations to humanity stop here, for he

"hath made of one blood all nations of men." By this declaration the apostle interweaves another cardinal truth in his great argument, and in so doing announces a principle so far-reaching that it has an important bearing on the doctrine of redemption itself. Not only does he expose the fallacy of the theory then prevalent through the world that each nation had a different ancestral origin, and rebuke the pride of the Athenians, who plumed themselves on being the *autochthones** of the earth, and who wore golden grasshoppers in their hair in token of their derivation from the sacred soil of Attica—distinct from and superior to all the other races of mankind—but he announces a truth in which the great doctrine of the atonement itself is involved. The unity of the race and the redemption of the race are correlated truths. The common origin of mankind and the common blood are essential to the common salvation provided for the world. What becomes of the revelation of sin and of the atonement for sin which underlies the entire Christian system, if the unity of the race can be disproved? If it be not true that "by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin," then we have no interest in the assurance that "by the obedience of One many shall be made righteous." The connection between sin and salvation is summarily severed. If the first Adam was not made a living soul, neither was the Second Adam made a quickening Spirit. If in Adam all did not die, neither in Christ shall all be made alive. Just as the unity of the divine nature and the unity of the race are correlated truths, so the federal headship of Adam and the federal Headship of Christ are linked in indissoluble union. It follows, then, that if all men are not of one blood there are some men for whom Christ's blood was not shed. To such,

* *Autochthones*—indigenous, born of the land itself, aborigines.

Eden was not lost by sin; to such, Paradise will not be found by the atonement of the great Sin-bearer; the pathway to the cross will be obliterated and the door of heaven hopelessly barred.

But no such statute of limitation exists, for one purpose for which men were created, as the apostle goes on to tell us, was "that they might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us." "Every one;" then no one is excluded because of clime, color or nationality. God is near, not only by outward proximity, but by a connection so vital that men are included in him as the source and sphere of their existence. "For in him we live and move and have our being"—not in the pantheistic sense that God, Nature, man and all entities are one and the same, and that "God comes to self-consciousness in man," but in the sense that life, activity and continued existence result from our intimate and essential union with him, not only as a Creator, but as a Father, "for we are also his offspring."

It may have added a momentary interest to the address as Paul's hearers were reminded that this was a truth which some of their own poets had taught. The astronomical poem of Aratus, which Cicero thought worthy of translation into Latin, had contained the very words, "For we are his offspring;" and so did the hymn of Cleanthes to Jupiter; and then how obvious the apostle's inference that if we are the offspring of God, our likeness to him must be spiritual and not corporeal, and therefore we ought not to think that the Godhead could be represented by gold or silver or stone graven by art or man's device! For surely to deify matter would be to degrade the Godhead and to render worship to what is inferior to ourselves, notwithstanding the skill with which it might be wrought.

The genius of their sculptors might "make the marble speak" and seem to weep and love, but it would be the cold, insensate marble still, without intelligence, sympathy or affection. And as he had before taught that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, though beautiful as the Parthenon itself, so now he teaches that no image can be worthy of him, though carved with the matchless art of a Phidias or a Praxiteles.

Thus did the apostle bring clearly into view the great truth of the Personality, the Providence and the Fatherhood of God—a doctrine of which the wisest and best of the sages of Greece were ignorant; and thus did he show that every false conception of the divine character entails a degradation on the worshiper which no æsthetic beauty of ritual or service can redeem.

It was a sad thought that the perception of the beautiful, which had found its outward development in temples of faultless proportion and in sculptured divinities of matchless symmetry, had for so long a time been accompanied with a spiritual blindness to the beauty of holiness, and to the worship and homage of the heart which alone could be acceptable to the living and true God; but this long-continued ignorance God in his forbearance had *overlooked* (no such unbecoming metaphor as "winked at" was used by Paul), but *now* the era had come when all men, everywhere, were commanded to repent, not only of idolatry in all its forms, but of sin in all its diversities. Repentance, then, is not optional, but imperative—not as an arbitrary command, but because due to God, and right for the soul, and indispensable as the first step toward reconciliation with God and the pacification of the sinner's own conscience—indispensable, too, with reference to the soul's eternal good, for the violation of the command to repent would certainly form

one count in the terrible indictment at the tribunal toward which all men haste, at the appointed day when God would "judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained."

How natural it was, how in keeping with all his surroundings, that, standing there in the Areopagus, the seat of the most venerable court in the world; where Mars himself was said to have been tried by a bench of magisterial gods; where Orestes was tried for a crime which became the theme of one of the most famous Athenian tragedies; where Socrates had been condemned for his honest rebuke of the idolatry, sensuality and frivolity of the city,—that Paul should by a natural transition call the attention of his hearers to another and more august tribunal by a solemn reference to the time when the whole world should stand before the judgment-seat of Christ! (*Studies in the Acts.*)

Both the time and the man had been ordained. Jesus had been raised from the grave to the throne. It was right that He who came in such lowly humility to save the world should sit in all the grandeur of the God-man to judge the world.

The assurance that this awful day would surely come had already been given in the fact that Christ had been raised from the dead.

When the apostle uttered these solemn words, "some mocked." No sect or school of pagan philosophers taught the doctrine of a resurrection from the dead; no such anticipation brought comfort to the heart of the bereaved mourner. Bright and gay as was Athenian life, inexpressibly sad was an Athenian funeral. The pale marble that marked the spot where the loved and lost were buried never caught even the faintest gleam of the light with which revelation irradiates the graves of

the departed, and no cunning tracery of the sculptor's chisel could relieve the sadness of the epitaphs, selected sometimes from their noblest poets, which proclaimed that "after death there was no hope for the body." To the bereaved death was an insatiable sea, chanting only a hopeless dirge.

To some in the audience Paul's twice-repeated reference to the resurrection may have sounded like a voice from heaven—certainly to those of them who are said to have believed, such as Dionysius, Damaris and the unnamed "others with them."

Such was this wonderful discourse, which still sounds loud and clear in the ear of the world, though the voices of other orators more renowned in their day come to us faintly in occasional echoes. It consists of but a few verses, it makes but a page in sacred literature, yet the more we analyze it the more surprised are we at the number of the errors it refutes, and the number of the truths, then unknown, it proclaims. It refutes the error of the naturalist by declaring creation to be the work of God; of the pantheist, by showing that God is not identified with the essence of the universe, but separate from it, before it, above it and supreme over it; the error of the positivist, by demonstrating God to be a personal being, intelligent, loving and paternal; the error of the evolutionist, by pointing out special interventions in Nature and the constant exercise of a providence superior to the "laws" by which he ordinarily works.

In his account of creation Paul gives the true cosmogony; of the origin of man, the true anthropology; of the resurrection and the final judgment, the true eschatology. And, as an illustration of the comprehensive range of his thought beyond the pale of theology, it has

been remarked that in this short discourse he admits the claims of every noble art and science in his notice of every academical department—philosophy and natural science, poetry and art, history and law. (*Lange on Acts.*)

Finally, we may observe that while the systems of philosophy current in Paul's day have become obsolete or survive only in the annals which record the speculations of past ages, the Christianity of which he was the great expounder is now the chief fact of the world, sustaining the faith, brightening the hopes and comforting the sorrows of the ever-growing millions of its subjects. Not a sentence which he uttered on Mars' Hill has lost its vital power, and his salutatory words, "Ye men of Athens," may now be changed to "Ye men of all nations," for every disclosure he made of the divine character and purposes, and of human duty and destiny, are applicable to us to-day.

We too are commanded to offer a spiritual worship to the God who "dwelleth not in temples made with hands;" we too are dependent on Him who gives "life and breath and all things;" we too, partakers of the "one blood," are debtors to the whole human race, to whose temporal or spiritual wants we can minister; we too, as sharers in a common depravity, are called to immediate repentance and faith; and no Athenian to whom Paul spoke had more interest than ourselves in the solemn assurance that "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness."

"Here, too, we have a picture of three ways in which men treat the gospel offer: (1.) The openly scoffing and profane: 'some mocked.' (2.) The undecided and procrastinating: 'We will hear thee again of this matter.' (3.) Those who accept and are saved: 'Howbeit certain

men clave to him and believed.''" (*Roots and Fruits of the Christian Life.*)

After the statement that "some mocked" at Paul's words, and that others said, "We will hear thee again of this matter," there is something pathetic in the simple words, "So Paul departed from among them," the echo of his retreating footsteps growing fainter and fainter until a great silence fell upon them. There was an opportunity offered, an opportunity slighted, an opportunity lost.

One of our familiar hymns reminds us of this impressive truth in another form. Jesus stands and knocks. To those who do not open the door there will be a knell in the final knock:

"*His feet, departed, ne'er return.*"

May we not say, then, with the greatest solemnity and with the greatest affection, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts"?

PAUL AT CORINTH.

BY THE REV. T. D. WITHERSPOON, D. D.

March 9.—Acts 18:1-17.

FROM the summit of the Acropolis at Athens, looking toward the west, one could plainly see through the clear atmosphere of Greece, at a distance of forty-five miles, the lofty Acro-Corinthus, the temple-crowned mountain at whose base lay the wealthy and luxurious city of Corinth. Thither the apostle Paul now directs his course. As a great commercial centre from which the light of Christianity, once enkindled, will naturally radiate along all the lines of commerce and of trade, he recognizes the importance of establishing at the earliest possible moment a church in this city.

But a strange depression of spirit comes over him as he enters the great metropolis—a depression such as we do not find him experiencing anywhere else. The evidences of it are manifold. Writing afterward to the Corinthian church, and referring to this early period of his ministry, he says, “For I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.” The testimony of the historian in the passage which we are studying to-day is that when Silas and Timotheus came to Corinth they found him “pressed in spirit.” But the chief evidence is in the vision which was accorded to him, and the words of encouragement it brings. The “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold

not thy peace," tells of a state of despondency from which the heavenly vision was intended to arouse him. The words of the Golden Text which follow give a clue both to the elements of discouragement and to the divine corrective, whilst the body of the lesson for to-day shows the working out under the Divine Providence of the very conditions which were needful to the realization of the Lord's promise and to the success of the apostle's work.

I. Let us, then, guided by the Golden Text and in a careful study of the peculiar circumstances in which the apostle was placed, endeavor to ascertain, first, what were the sources of the apostle's discouragement, and what the elements of encouragement in reference to them afforded in the vision of the text. And whilst our study of to-day will have practical interest for all Christian workers everywhere, it will have peculiar significance for those called to labor in the great commercial cities and trade-centres of our land.

(1.) The first element of discouragement with the apostle no doubt was the sense of personal loneliness and isolation that came over him as he approached the gay, worldly, dissolute city. Entering the little port of Cenchræa through the multitude of ships of every clime, he came to land amidst bales of merchandise, throngs of merchants, trains of porters and beasts of burden. From the warehouses and the shipping around him he looked upward to the temple of Venus that crowned the citadel, and entering the city over which she presided he saw that the hearts of the people were divided between the acquisition of wealth on the one hand and the pursuit of pleasure on the other. Between him and this gay, worldly, frivolous people there was no sympathy, no congeniality. He felt that sense of loneliness, want of sympathy, lack

of spiritual communion which many a faithful servant of God has felt in the midst of the worldliness and dissoluteness of a great city. To add to this, he was almost, if not entirely, alone. He had sent for Silas and Timothy (Acts 17:15) to come to him at Athens, but they seem in some way to have been hindered, and did not reach him until some time after his settlement in Corinth, so that during the earlier part of his ministry he was without the companionship and counsel which would have cheered him in his solitude.

In this state of loneliness that which he needed to cheer him, that which every Christian worker needs, is just the message contained in the first clause of the text: “*For I am with thee.*” Jesus, that same divine One who had said for the comfort of the Eleven when he was about to depart, “*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end the world,*” now appears in person to his discouraged servant and reminds him of this promise, assuring him of his personal presence with him now. In our times of depression—and what faithful servant of God is without them?—there is nothing that can cheer us as does the assurance that Jesus is spiritually present with us, his eye of love upon us, his arm of friendship around us, his ear of sympathy open to us. Our joy is that he has said, “*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*”

(2.) The second element of discouragement in entering such a city as Corinth would arise from a view of the lawlessness and liability to popular tumult and violence of a community held together merely by the love of pleasure or the greed of gain. In Jerusalem, where the priestly power was dominant, and in Athens, where the memory of the great lawgivers of Greece still held sway over the hearts of the people, there was some reverence for law, some due maintenance of order, some security

of person and of life. But in volatile, mercurial, licentious Corinth there was no knowing at what moment some enemy of the Cross might fire the passions of the turbulent mob, and no forecasting to what extent of personal violence the populace might be carried where the magistrates would likely be in sympathy with the rabble, and disposed, like Pilate, for popularity's sake to carry out their will.

To meet this element in the apostle's discouragement what could have been more suited than those gracious words, "No man shall set on thee to hurt thee," bringing, as they did, the assurance that the hearts even of these fickle and lawless multitudes about him were "in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water" (Prov. 21:1), so that he could turn them "whithersoever he will"? In this doctrine of God's sovereign control over the hearts of wicked men the missionaries of the Cross in heathen lands have found comfort. In the midst of great cities, surrounded by inflammable elements that needed but a spark to set them on fire, these servants of God have walked serenely, knowing that One walked with them having power to extinguish the spark ere it should fall or to hold in complete subjection the wrath that would otherwise kindle into a consuming flame. It is the joy of every worker for Christ to know that the great Head of the Church has all power in heaven and upon earth. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

(3.) But the third element of discouragement, and the chief one, no doubt, was found in Paul's apprehension that the preaching of the gospel to such a people would be utterly unacceptable and barren of results. With hearts immersed in business or intoxicated with sensual pleasure, what effect could the preaching of the

gospel produce? Amidst so much gayety and frivolity where could the precious seed take root? He had come with the determination "not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." How would such preaching be received by this wealthy, luxurious, pleasure-loving people? Many a servant of God, since called to minister in some centre of wealth and affluence, of luxury and fashion, has felt this same chill of despondency creeping over him, and has asked in the agony of his soul, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

What is the comfort which the Lord gives to his disengaged servant? He bears him back to the great foundation-truths of that system which men call Calvinism, and which it is so popular in certain quarters now-a-days to ridicule or to travesty: "I have much people in this city." His, not in the sense that they had already believed on him, for they had not, but his in the sense that they had been chosen by him before all worlds; his in the sense that they had been given to him by the Father in the councils of eternity; his in the sense that they belonged to that elect people whom he had covenanted to redeem; his in the sense that he had shed his blood for them on the cross, and that they were part of the purchase of his sufferings and death. He knew them individually, had called them by their name, and had sent Paul to set in motion the instrumentalities by which they should be brought to repentance and to a saving interest in his blood.

How could Paul fail, then? He had only to do his work faithfully, and the Holy Spirit, the purchase of Christ's blood, would be sent to seal upon the hearts of his hearers a salvation which had been made theirs in covenant before the foundation of the world. Cheer

up, O desponding servant of God! The Master has an elect people here, and your feeble instrumentality has behind it the unchanging sovereignty and mercy of God.

It is not strange that in the unrenewed heart there should be opposition to the doctrine of God's sovereign, electing love. But it is strange that many devout Christians manifest such antagonism to these doctrines of grace. They are full of most precious comfort. In the eternal purpose of an unchanging God, in his covenant-gift to the divine Redeemer before all worlds, in that unrelaxing hold by which "all that the Father hath given him he keeps," and in that immutable love by which, "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end," there is strength for the tired and discouraged worker, there is hope for the anxious and careworn parent, there is cheer for the timid, doubting intercessor at the throne. May not God have placed you where you are as pastor, Sabbath-school teacher, parent, guardian, employer, even as he placed Paul in discouraging Corinth, that you may be the instrument in his hand in saving some of the "much people" whom he has in the city or community in which you labor? Cheer up, brother! God's eternal purpose of love can never fail.

II. Let us now, in a brief review of the body of the lesson, study the interweaving of God's providence with his purpose of election, arranging all the conditions necessary to Paul's success in gathering into the Church the elect people in Corinth.

(1.) The first condition, manifestly, is that Paul shall have the means of subsistence whilst he is preaching the gospel. The wonderful providence of God in arranging

for his support in this respect is narrated in verses second and third of the lesson. Long before he came to Corinth, God had brought to that city, from Rome, Aquila, a tentmaker, with Priscilla his wife. They were Jews, living at Rome because of its advantages as a centre for their trade in sails and tents. Claudius having issued a decree banishing all Jews from Italy (as Suetonius, the Roman historian, says, because of a tumult occasioned by Christianity), Aquila and Priscilla were forced to leave Rome, and, seeking the next best centre, came to Corinth ; and so when Paul came he found employment with them, and thus his support was providentially arranged in the way most agreeable to him, as he had a home in their house and remunerated them by his labor for their care. In this first provision, then, we see God's providence running through years of preparation and along varied lines of adjustment, leading to the settlement of Aquila and Priscilla in Rome, the decree of Claudius, the removal to Corinth, Paul's connection with Aquila, and all the circumstances of the case.

(2.) The second condition is that he shall have efficient helpers in his work. To secure these we have first the acceptance of the gospel by Aquila and Priscilla, whose intelligence and zeal made them invaluable workers, and whose services Paul again and again acknowledges with thanksgiving. In their society he had delightful Christian companionship, and in their co-operation needed help. Then, also, Silas and Timotheus (v. 5), who had failed in some way to reach the apostle at Athens, were brought to him at the most opportune moment by the blessing of God, so that he had valuable ministerial help after long and unexpected delay.

(3.) He must have some suitable place for holding religious services. This, too, is in the providence of

God most agreeably arranged. For all informal services through the week the large room in which the tents and sails are stitched, and which, out of business hours, would be at his disposal, would amply suffice. So long as he directs his ministry to the Jews he has the use of the synagogue, in which, as a Jew and a former master of the law, he would have the privilege of speaking. When he turns to the Gentiles, and is of course excluded from the privileges of the synagogue, the Lord inclines the heart of one Justus (v. 7), a Gentile proselyte, "whose house joined hard to the synagogue," to throw open his dwelling as a place of worship; and so Paul has the twofold advantage of a hall free to Gentiles as well as Jews, and yet next door to the synagogue, so that it is easily accessible to such attendants at the synagogue-service as may desire to hear him.

(4.) He must have protection from the violence of his enemies and liberty to speak boldly in the name of Jesus. He has been so often taken before magistrates, and scourged, imprisoned, expelled or forbidden to speak, that without some special interposition in this regard his work may be seriously interrupted or completely hindered by some complication with the civil authorities. Provision has been made for this also by a train of providential arrangements (vs. 12-17) as remarkable as those we have already studied. Just as this crisis is approaching, when so much depends upon the character of the Roman governor in Corinth, the Senate at Rome sends out to Achaia as proconsul Gallio, the brother of Seneca, the celebrated Roman moralist. Like his brother a thorough skeptic in all matters of religion, he is nevertheless a great student and admirer of Roman law, and, in theory at least, an ardent advocate of a high tone of public

morals. Being, as we know from profane history, a man of very gentle and apparently pliant disposition, the enemies of Paul think that by raising a public disturbance, and by a clamorous appeal to his tribunal for the punishment of Paul as the occasion of the tumult, they may intimidate him, as the Jews at Jerusalem did the vacillating Pilate, and so secure the execution of their innocent victim. But God in his providence has put a very different man from Pilate in power. Gallio, undisturbed by the clamor, and moved neither by favoritism nor by love of popularity, looks at the whole question from the standpoint of Roman law and public morals, and, finding neither of these involved, dismisses the case contemptuously and without a hearing, and drives the persecutors from his presence. Nor is this all, but whilst he thus holds Paul under the protection and security which the law gives, he sits quietly by whilst a disturbance takes place amongst the persecutors themselves; and when Sosthenes, who had been made chief ruler of the synagogue after the conversion of Crispus (v. 8), and who was no doubt the prime mover in the arraignment of Paul, is beaten by the Hellenistic party in the synagogue, who had most probably opposed the resort to the civil power, Gallio looks on with perfect indifference, so that it becomes manifest to the Jews that they can expect no sympathy from him in any future attempts to interfere with the apostle's preaching; and so he is able afterward to speak the word of God boldly, no man hindering him.

Can any one look upon these independent and yet closely-interwoven threads of divine providence, all leading to the same result in the successful planting of the Church at Corinth, and not see the Lord's hand bringing to fulfillment purposes all unknown to those through whose agency they are being wrought out? Is there not

something full of comfort in this thought of a sovereign purpose of grace working itself out through all the tangled threads of human purpose and passion? And with such a power working with us and in us may we not joyfully resolve, like the apostle, to "know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and him crucified"? May we not have faith in the power of the "old, old story" amidst all the worldliness and sensuality even of the gayest and most pleasure-loving metropolis in which any of us may be called to labor?

THE COMING OF THE LORD.

BY REV. MARVIN R. VINCENT, D. D.

March 16.—1 Thess. 4:13-18 and 5:1-8.

THE Thessalonian church was composed mostly of Gentile Christians—a fact which has an important bearing upon our text. To the Jews the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was familiar as an article of their current theology. They held it, it is true, in a way which made it hard for them to reconcile their conceptions with Christ's teachings on that subject; but of the possibility and the fact of resurrection itself they, with the exception of the Sadducees, did not need to be convinced.

It was far otherwise with the Gentiles. It would be easy to cite from pagan authors numerous expressions of the hopelessness which attached to death in Greek and Roman thought. The tragic poet *Æschylus* gave voice to the sentiment of paganism in the words, "There is no resurrection of one who is once dead." A Roman poet renowned for his gay and graceful verses says: "Suns can set and return, but when our brief day shall have ended we shall sleep for an eternal night." To men educated in such sentiments the Christian doctrine of the resurrection would appeal as something wellnigh incredible.

This strangeness goes far to explain the ease with which Gentile converts were disturbed by questions growing

out of that doctrine. In the Thessalonian church these disturbances manifested themselves in two ways. The members of that church were persuaded that the second coming of Christ was in the near future. The result of this was similar to that which has attended the Millerite and other similar delusions in later times: a part of the church had given themselves up to wild excitement, and had manifested a disposition to abandon their ordinary callings and to throw themselves for support upon their rich fellow-members until the Lord should appear.

This fact explains the exhortations to the discharge of present duty with which these two Epistles abound. "You have no need," says Paul, "that I write unto you of the times and seasons.. The day of the Lord indeed cometh as a thief in the night, but you are not in the position of sleeping men surprised by a robber. Ye are not in darkness, that that day should take *you* unawares. As Christians it is to be assumed that you are always ready. Let your Lord, therefore, whenever he may come, find you faithfully discharging your ordinary duties, studying to be quiet, not disturbing the Church with your speculations, comforting and edifying one another, praying, giving thanks, working and eating *your own bread*."

But there was another class, to which this text is especially addressed. The Thessalonian church had been peculiarly afflicted, and, like all Christian converts, its members had been taught to look for the coming of the Lord as the recompense for all sufferings and the righting of all wrongs. Suppose, then, they should die before his coming? What of their brethren who had already died with their wrongs unredressed and their reputations unvindicated? Were they to be cut off from the good days and the good things which were to come with the coming of the Lord?

To these Paul says: "As for those Christians who die before the coming of Christ, I would not have you ignorant or hopeless. You believe that Jesus died and rose again. That fact carries with it the resurrection of those who die believing on him. So far from losing their privileges and vindications, God shall, with the coming of Christ, bring from the dead those who sleep in Jesus. We who shall then be alive shall not prevent (anticipate or be beforehand with) those who shall be in their graves. We shall not enjoy the blessings of Christ's coming *without* them nor *before* them. The Lord shall descend from heaven with a signal-shout, like that uttered by a captain to his host, and the dead in Christ shall rise *first*; and *then* we who are alive shall, *together with them*, be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall *we* ever be with the Lord, and enjoy *together* the blessings of his presence."

Let us look now at some of the details of this passage.

I. Take the words used to describe the departed followers of Christ: "*Them that fall asleep.*" How beautiful that is against the background of that pagan hopelessness of which we have spoken! Though the pagan authors sometimes used "sleep" as an expression for death, it was only as a poetic figure. When Christ, on the other hand, said, "Our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*," he used the word not as a figure, but as the expression of a fact. In that profound mystery of death in which the pagan saw only *nothingness*, Jesus saw continued life, rest, waking—just those elements which enter into sleep. And thus in Christian speech and thought, as the doctrine of the resurrection struck its roots deeper, the word *dead*, with its hopeless finality, gave way to the more gracious word *asleep*. Christianity writes its his-

tory upon human speech no less than upon human institutions. The names which the pagan gave to the place where he laid the ashes of his dead carried no suggestion of hope or comfort. It was a *burying-place*, a *hiding-place*, a *monumentum*, a mere *memorial* of something for ever gone. But the Christian thought of death as sleep brought with it into Christian speech the kindred thought of a chamber of rest, and embodied it in the beautiful word *cemetery*—the place to lie down to sleep. Oh, how that thought has revolutionized the whole range of sentiments attaching to death! I remember a morning when I walked down one of the long halls of the Vatican Museum between two rows of slabs taken from the Catacombs. On one side were those from the Christian tombs, and on the other those from the pagan sepulchres. There are not many more impressive places in the world than this, where the Christian and the heathen ideas of death, written down in stone, confront each other. Here are two inscriptions from the pagan side, both from children's tombs: *Maximus lived two years and five months. O cruel Fortune, who rejoicest in fierce death! why is Maximus, who so lately played upon my lap, suddenly snatched away? This stone now lies on his tomb.* A mother might have dictated that, for even in pagan Rome were mothers who loved their little ones and dropped bitter tears over their dead faces. Oh how bitter when all that was left was the stone on the tomb! Here is another, bearing the name Anna: *As a lovely rose unfolds in its season and then withers, so thou didst begin to bloom in beauty, but suddenly thou didst cease to be mine. This little gift, alas! is all I can give thee: my wish that the earth lie lightly on thee.* Thanks to the Christ of the resurrection that we can write over the little graves to which our hearts and our steps so often turn, *Still mine,*

because asleep in Jesus! How marked the contrast with the other side of the hall! One sees there at once that a new set of ideas has gathered about the fact of death. The hopelessness has vanished. Everywhere we read *In peace*, while the symbols of the dove, the olive-leaf, the palm-branch, the anchor, the vine, the paschal cup, tell of a faith which sees beyond the dark catacomb the day-break of immortality.

II. This distinction between the Christian and the heathen views of death is as sharply marked in this text as by the space between the two rows of inscriptions in the Vatican. Notice the words, correctly rendered in the Revised Version, “the rest:” “That *ye* sorrow not, even as *the rest* who have no hope.” Paul thus throws society, with respect to death, into two classes only—those who have hope and those who have none. He knew the speculations of philosophers about the future life. He knew that the poets had drawn pictures of Elysium and Tartarus, but to him none of these speculations and surmisings amounted to a *hope*; for any one who is familiar with Paul’s writings knows that to him hope means far more than longing or contemplation of possibilities. It partakes of the character of assurance. According to him, only faith in Christ gives men a *hope* of a future life. Believers in Jesus may sorrow *hopefully*; as for *the rest*, they have *no hope*.

And that is the very position which the modern Christian teacher, no less than Paul, is compelled to take. Now, as then, the air is full of oracular utterances and speculations about the future life, or rather about *no* future life, for that is the point to which they mostly tend. And the moment we get off Christian ground I cannot see that we have any advantage over the heathen of

Paul's time. The modern philosophic schools have thrown little if any more light upon the question of life after death than did Cicero or Plato. I am not sure that they have not rather made the "darkness visible;" for modern science, with its profound and subtle study of matter in its connections with spirit, makes out a terribly strong case against immortality. If the decision rests with science alone, I fear we must give up the hope and pass into the ranks of "the rest." Professor Tyn-dall is reported to have said, "I view nature, existence, the universe, like the keyboard of the pianoforte. What came before the bass I don't know and don't care; what comes after the treble I equally little know or care; the keyboard with its black and white keys it is mine to study."

III. And you see that Paul is particular to state the *ground* of the comfort which he offers the Thessalonians. No matter whether we read the words "sleep in Jesus" or "bring through Jesus with him," the great truth is the same. The hope rests upon the death and resurrection of Jesus. In Paul's mind, whenever he writes on this theme, everything hinges on the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. In the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians you find drawn out, as you can find it nowhere else, the teaching of Nature on this point. Nature, for instance, shows that *dissolution is not destruction*. The grain of wheat falls into the ground: its shape is lost, its fibre disintegrated, but the principle of life in it emerges in due time in the form of the bearded wheat. Again, Nature shows that there are cases where *a higher type of life can be reached only through death*. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit;" "Thou fool-

ish one! that which *thou thyself* sowest is not quickened except it die; and thou sowest, not the full-headed wheat, but *bare grain, naked seed.*" It may not be true that *man* can reach his best only through death and by way of the grave, but Nature, at any rate, does not contradict the truth. She teaches it rather in every wheat-field. Once more, Nature teaches that somewhere in God's universe *there may be death, dissolution and resurrection without the sacrifice of identity.* The wheat-stalk which rises from the planted seed is a new body, a far more beautiful form of life than the naked seed which was sown, and yet it is *wheat.* That which thou sowest, thou sowest *not that body which shall be*, but *a bare grain*, it may chance of wheat or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body *even as he willed* in the beginning when he set the distinctive mark upon the wheat and the other kinds of grain. It never loses that type. If you sow wheat, nothing but wheat can come up. It may be, assuming resurrection for the moment to be a fact—it may be that death and resurrection will change you and me so that we cannot recognize each other, but Nature does not teach that.

And yet, with all this teaching of Nature, we have not yet reached a *hope.* The scientist says to me, "It is all very well to draw pretty comparisons between what you *see* in the wheat-field and what the Bible *tells* you about man's rising from the dead; but show me that the facts you see in Nature are *literally transferable* to man. Show me that they *have actually been* facts in the history of man. There is a great gap between the plant's life and the man's life, and I require more than a mere assumed analogy to carry me over that space."

I reply, "Your demand is a fair one. Some *man* must stand between Nature and humanity and show, in his own experience, that the resurrection of Nature is literally car-

ried out in the resurrection of man. Paul takes the same ground. Much as he makes of that magnificent analogy, it all goes for nothing in his mind without the *fact* of Christ's resurrection. Without this, one term of the analogy is only an assumption. Hear him: 'If Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, your faith is vain, and they who have died believing in Jesus and in the resurrection have been the victims of a fond delusion, and *have perished!*' Science has not carried us a step farther. I can bring you from her laboratories no optic glass which can penetrate the darkness enshrouding the grave. When I ask her why I may hope for life after death, why I may hope that my beloved dead have not been resolved into the elements, she has no answer to give me. And therefore we must keep in mind how much depends upon the *historical fact* of Christ's resurrection. If that is not a fact, it is nothing. It cannot be a doctrine independently of the fact, for the fact is the root of the doctrine. 'If the resurrection be not true in the same sense in which the passion is true, then death still remains the great conqueror. As far as all experience goes, no pledge has been given to us of his defeat. A splendid guess, an inextinguishable desire alone have sought to pierce the darkness beyond the tomb if Jesus has not (as we believe) borne our human nature into the presence of God.''*

With this fact we meet the demand of science. We believe, on good and substantial evidence, that Jesus died and rose again; that that which takes place in the fields actually took place in Christ's person. The gulf is spanned between Nature and humanity. The corn of wheat can rise again from death: Christ shows that a man can die and rise again.

* Westcott: *Gospel of the Resurrection.*

IV. And through Paul's words we see how this truth carries with it, besides the assurance of immortality for the individual Christian, the assurance of the *permanent fellowship* of the Church with Christ and *in Christ*. They who fall asleep, sleep *through Jesus*—by reason of their fellowship with him. The experience of death, moreover, is common to them and to him; he died as they die. Then God will bring them *with him*. When he shall come they shall come also, being raised from the dead as he was raised. Then “we which are alive and are left” shall go up to meet the Lord, and shall be *with him* for ever—with him in life, in death, in resurrection, in eternal glory.

And this fellowship with Christ carries with it the mutual fellowship of believers in Christ. The main intent of this text, as already stated, is to show that the living Church on earth and the host of the dead in Christ are to be united in the enjoyment of the blessings of Christ's second coming. “We which are left shall, *together with them*, go up to meet the Lord, and so shall *we* ever be with the Lord.”

Once more: This truth, in turn, carries with it the truth that *now* the Church on earth and the Church above, by virtue of their being alike in Christ, are not divided, but are one Church. I know that certain minds shrink from the thought that earth and heaven can be in any wise alike, overlooking the fact which stares them in the face from every page of the gospel that this life is crowded with types and shadows of heavenly things. There is a side on which we know little or nothing about heaven. When Paul or John try to tell us of that side they break down. But about the *moral conditions* of heaven we do know a great deal. Whatever we know about Christ we know about heaven. Christ himself has told us a great

deal when he has said, "Where I am, there ye shall be also;" and Christ is "with us alway," and "our conversation *is* in heaven," and "he that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." The moral conditions of a Christian in heaven and of a Christian on earth must have a great many things in common. The great interests, the great affections, the great laws of spiritual life, must be essentially the same. The Church of Christ on earth, loving, praising, adoring, serving Christ, united with Christ, living its life by the faith of the Son of God, is not divided in any essential thing (morally speaking) from those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

"*They sing the Lamb in hymns above,
And we in hymns below.*"

They love the Christ whom we love, and find their eternal rest in Him who is *our* rest. We are not divided, because on earth and in heaven alike we are *with him*. It is as when a mighty host is marching through a defile, and the head of the column disappears round a turn in the road and is lost to the sight of those in the rear ; but they are still in line, though unseen. The precious dead have but passed round the turn in the road—out from the shadow, where we are still toiling over the rocks, into the bright plains of heaven. The line is unbroken.

"One army of the living God,
To his command we bow;
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."

CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE.

BY THE REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

March 23.—*2 Thess. 3:13*

"ONE monster there is in the universe, and that is—an idle man," said the keen and crabbed Carlyle, who was himself a tremendous toiler for fourscore years. An idle man is not so much a biped as he is a bivalve; and when wealth breeds indolence, it creates a sort of human oyster-bed in which self-indulgence grows fat and succulent for the feeding of sharpers, and finally for the devouring worm. If labor were originally pronounced as a curse, it may be transmuted into the parent of innumerable blessings; nay, we are told in the very chapter before us that if any man will not work, neither should he eat.

"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said an infinitely wiser Teacher than the philosopher of Chelsea. At the age of twelve the eager boy of Nazareth exclaims, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" and in his later years the same untiring industry spoke out in the words, "I must work the works of Him that sent me;" "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work." His whole biography on earth is a record of swift and strenuous labor. How often the word "straightway" occurs in the narrative, showing with what promptness he grasped hold of the immediate duty of the moment! What an immense

volume of work in the form of teaching, of travel, of healing and of miracles he often compressed into a single day! It was at the close of one of these wonderful days of achievement that he laid his toil-worn head to an uneasy sleep on the hard "pillow" of the fishing-boat. Even physical wants gave way to the higher demands of duty to the sick, the suffering and the benighted, and we are told that sometimes he "had no leisure so much as to eat." When he once seeks a temporary retirement for repose and devotion, the disciples break in upon him with "All men seek for thee," and without a murmur he replies, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for therefore am I sent."

His apostles made him their ensample in this as in many other things. Paul was a terrible toiler. Whether he were driving the tent-needle or driving the pen, whether he were healing a cripple at Lystra or climbing the hills of Galatia, or organizing a church at Philippi, or making collection for the poor brethren in Jerusalem, he was always the man with an hundred hands. "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," was the motto of his busy and beneficent career. It was not only mental toil to which he gave himself, but hard manual labor as well.. His trade as a tentmaker was a constant resource in his times of need. When he came to Thessalonica on his first missionary visit his only means of earning his daily bread was his mechanical occupation. His tent-needle was to him what the saw and hammer had been to his Master at Nazareth. In his first letter to the Thessalian brethren he says: "Ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail; for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." The converts in that busy seaport-town would appear to have

been chiefly artisans. So he exhorts them to stick quietly to their own business, to earn their bread with honest work, and not to rely on the charities of their neighbors. In a part of the world where indolence has always been a besetting sin they were to commend their Christianity by their conscientious industry and manly independence.

Several months after the date of this first Epistle, Paul sits down at Corinth and writes a second letter to the Christians at Thessalonica. In this Epistle, after predicting and describing the mysterious "man of sin" that should yet be revealed, he closes with an extended exhortation (in the last chapter) to *Christian diligence*. This is the chief topic of the lesson before us. Let us look at some its salient points.

The brief chapter begins with a request for prayer: "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, even as also it is with you; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men; for all men have not faith." In this latter clause he refers especially to the perverse Jews around him at Corinth. But his confidence in the Lord is unshaken, and also his confidence that they would be established by his grace and kept from the Evil One. Then follows his own earnest prayer that the Lord would guide their hearts into the love of God and the patience of Jesus. The translation in the Common Version is unhappy, because the apostle had not been affirming that the second advent of Christ was to be looked for speedily, and therefore a "patient waiting *for* Christ" would be quite uncalled for. Rather did he pray that they might be endued with the same patience which their Master displayed under trials and malignant oppositions. There was to be no compromise with certain disorderly characters who refused to obey the apostle's precepts or to fol-

low the apostle's example. The Greek word "*ατακτως*" is a military one, and describes unruly soldiers who will not march in line. In that day, as in our day, there were headstrong and self-conceited people who were continually breaking the ranks and doing more to make confusion in the Church than to make converts from the world. From such incorrigible mischief-makers the Thessalonian brethren were commanded to withdraw their fellowship.

Having administered these wholesome rebukes, Paul proceeds to lay down what may be styled the Christian law of labor. It is this: "If any man will not work, neither let him eat." The principle laid down in this stringent precept is that willful indolence never should command a premium; it never should be supported at the expense of the Church or of society. Neither the Church nor the community owes a living to a drone. He or she who *can* work and *won't* work shall have no share of the honey.

Of course the large loving heart of the apostle did not here or elsewhere offer any excuse for withholding charity from the innocent victims of sickness or other calamity. Paul was the last man in the world to lock up a purse or a larder against an unfortunate fellow-creature who was enfeebled in mind or body or estate. But to his manly soul the lazy lounger in God's world was also a "monster;" there was no place for such under either economy of works or grace. With what an honest independence could he point to his own example of voluntarily surrendering all claim of maintenance at their hands! "Neither," he says, "did we eat bread for nothing at any man's hand; but in labor and travail we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you." This, too, we did in order to set you an example of self-supporting industry and self-respecting manhood.

" His brow is wet with honest sweat;
 He earns whate'er he can;
He looks the whole world in the face,
 For he owes not any man."

Let us be grateful to the heroic apostle, not only for his example, but for the Christian law of industry which he has enunciated. It is worthy of constant reiteration from the pulpit, in the Sabbath-school and at the fire-side. We must teach our children that an idle brain is the devil's workshop, and an idle hand is the devil's tool. In these times it is written quite too legibly on too many brows, "I won't work." Too many of our young men are growing up with the pernicious idea that all manual labor is menial, and that every honest productive occupation is to be shirked in order to seek out some short and easy road to competence. This disgraceful delusion is breeding a swarm of idle sons and daughters who are not ashamed to depend upon their parents, and also a swarm of sharp adventurers who look at all business with the eye of a gambler, and who prefer the "hook and crook" of lucky speculation to the solid gains of patient industry. Into this snare of attempting to "eat" without earning too many members of the Church of God have been betrayed; some of them have paid dearly for their folly by dishonored characters and a bitter reproach brought on their Christian name.

Benjamin Franklin, who was never forward in advocating the claims of the Bible, acknowledged that his father frequently impressed upon him that proverb of Solomon, "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings." "I thence learned that industry is the only means of obtaining wealth or distinction; which encouraged me, though I did not think that I should ever literally stand before kings. But,

however, it has since happened, for I have stood before five, and had the honor of dining with one, the king of Denmark."

In the choice of occupation our young people should be taught that any calling in which they can serve God and their fellow-men is honorable. A household servant or a coal-heaver may make his "drudgery as divine" as Paul made the use of his tent-needle. There is a place in this world and a place in the Church of Christ for every one, high or humble, who believes that if he eats he must work. There is a wide subdivision of labor in God's vast house of industry. He entrusts Newton with a telescope and John Bunyan with a magic pen, but none the less does he put a "crook" into the hand of the shepherd of Salisbury Plain or a lump of clay into the hand of Palissy the potter. Everything *from* God, everything *for* God, is the Christian's motto. The holy consecration of labor which leads Palmer and Bonar to compose a hymn and Spurgeon to compose a sermon, led also Robert Raikes to organize Sunday-schools and William E. Dodge to earn his millions for the treasury of his Redeemer. He that will not work for Christ, neither shall he eat of that bread that cometh down from heaven. The simple reason why so many nominal Christians have no relish for prayer, or for the word of God, or the "body of Christ" as set forth on the sacramental board, is that they have not worked enough to give them an appetite. The hardest toilers are the hungriest feeders; they banquet on food that the world knoweth not of. "My meat," said the Master, "is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work."

After the apostle had commended to his brethren the sacred duty of diligence in their own business and in

the work of the Lord, he administers a sharp reproof to another class who were "busy" in a wrong direction. There are two kinds of activity—one to be commended and the other to be condemned; the one is the activity of the honey-bee, the other is the activity of the hornet and the gad-fly. To this latter sort he refers in this pungent passage: "We hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are *busybodies*." So it seems that there is a wide difference between the busy bees and the busybodies. The first class are "not slothful in business, always serving the Lord;" the second class are not exactly slothful, but they are serving the Evil One. In his First Epistle to Timothy the apostle photographs them more at full length when he says: "Withal, they learn to be idle, going about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." It seems that we could almost write certain names under these photographs, they are painted so vividly to the life. The apostle Peter also etches the same character in the fourth chapter of his First Epistle: "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters." He too would seem to have been stung by the gad-flies, and he hits the secret of their mischievousness in that single word "*other*." Instead of minding their own business and the work of the Lord, they meddle with the affairs of their neighbors—not in the line of needed help or sympathy, but in the line of officious interference or of house-to-house visitation for the purpose of sowing the tares of gossip and scandal. Even the meek and gentle Albert Barnes, while he earnestly commends the sympathy which seeks to bear others' burdens, pungently declares that "one of the most pestiferous of all persons is he or she who has

nothing to do but to meddle in the affairs of their neighbors." This language is not too strong.

The apostle's cure for this odious disease of the meddlesome fingers and the tattling tongue is what the physicians call "an alterative." "Now them that are such (*i. e.* are busybodies) we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." The injunction is, that they should devote themselves quietly, steadily and conscientiously to their honest work and their Christian duties. Then they would have no time to attend disorderly assemblages, or to pry into their neighbors' affairs, or to peddle scandal through their neighborhood. In that day, as in our day, the principle held good that the best antidote for wrong-doing was to keep head and heart and hand all at work in right-doing.

In this blessed business of doing right, of serving Christ and providing for their families, and of showing kindness to their poor or shiftless neighbors,—in this "well-doing" they are exhorted not to become faint-hearted or discouraged. One effect of the agitation among the Thessalonians about the second coming of our Lord had produced some excitement, and may have led certain persons to neglect their daily work. Heavy burdens were also thrown upon the infant church on account of the indolence of some and the afflictions of others. Under these or whatever other pressures, they are exhorted not to lose heart or slacken labor. This trumpet-call, first sounded by heroic Paul, rings down through the ages: *Faint not in well-doing!* Let this clarion call put new sinew into our limbs, new fibre into our faith. Christ Jesus is within us if we are his—imperfectly approached and obeyed indeed, but he is surely there. Therefore let us be of good courage. Let our

constant heart-cry be, "Lord, we do believe, but help our unbelief. We catch glimpses as through a glass: reveal thyself more fully in open vision. We are often tormented with doubts; the tares of old habits keep springing up afresh; we are often made to mourn for the weaknesses of others and to blush for our own; impostors and idlers and ingrates try our patience, even as we try God's patience with us; the very people we try to save often refuse to be saved; part of our walls which we slowly build up keeps falling down; labor for the Lord often costs much and yields no immediate fruit. But, O almighty Saviour! save us, *save* us from ever growing faint in partnership service with THEE! Help us carry the crosses, help us to win the crowns!"

We have traversed, briefly, the salient points in this chapter on Christian diligence. As many of you—whether in the Sabbath-school teaching corps or elsewhere—are desirous of doing good, let me offer some practical suggestions as to *spiritual work*.

(1.) The keynote to all success is to be found in two words—*personal effort*. You and I are primarily responsible for one individual, and he or she walks in our own shoes. Consecrate yourself heartily to Jesus. Then remember that sinners are not lost or saved in regiments: "Every *man* shall give account for himself to God." In God's sight there are no "masses;" he sees only individuals, and each one the possessor of an immortal soul. Each immortal soul must be reached, instructed, persuaded, brought to repentance and to an acceptance of a personal Saviour. "Ye shall be gathered one by one" is the history of all the converting work wrought since the day of Pentecost.

If we go back to the apostles as our models, we dis-

cover that the book of their "Acts" is mainly the record of the labors of individual Christians for the conversion and training of individual sinners. Their holy diligence did not find its outlet in committees, conferences or conventions. Very little is recorded about church organizations or their polity. If the polity of those primitive churches had any family likeness to the Presbyterian, then all the better for us, and for them also. But in the matter of Christian effort the Church was only an aggregate of single persons. Nothing was allowed to keep man from man, the individual believer from the individual sinner or sufferer. Peter goes right after Cornelius; Philip talks directly to Queen Candace's treasurer; Aquila and Priscilla have a great Bible-class in the person of the eloquent Apollos; Paul held a wonderful "inquiry-meeting" with one awakened jailer; and Dorcas was a whole sewing-society in herself. Amid all the modern conventions and teachers' institutes and union meetings is there not danger that each Christian may forget that he or she is the bearer of one lighted lamp? And if that lamp be well supplied with gracious oil, and its light be lovingly thrown over one sinner's pathway to guide him to Christ, more good will be accomplished than by a whole torchlight procession out on dress-parade. A crowd is often in the way when a soul is to be rescued. Christ led a deaf man out of the crowd when he wished to deal with him alone. Christ did not grow weary in well-doing when his only audience was a solitary woman at a well-side, and she a poor sin-stained creature at that. Those early Christians have given us the clue to success in the simple method of personal effort, and all the most effective workers from Paul to Harlan Page have wrought on this method. Even a Sabbath-school class is often too large and promiscuous

for close personal interview. Teacher! you have got to put yourself in loving contact with each member of your class at his home if you wish to bring each soul into contact with Christ.

(2.) We must be tolerant of each other, and be slow to discourage the well-meant efforts of zealous brethren, even though these efforts do not commend themselves to our judgment or to our taste. Indiscreet zeal often accomplishes more than frigid prudence. The Lord has a place and a work for "irregulars." During the Revolutionary War there was a place for Marion's guerillas as well as for Greene's regular battalions. Italy might not have won her unity and independence but for Garibaldi's red-shirted volunteers. So in the Master's spiritual campaigns, whether in the church, the Sunday-school, city missions or any line of benevolence, there is room for anybody and everybody who is filled with the Master's Spirit. Drive nobody back whose face is set toward Christ. Remember how the impulsive John once said to his Lord, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and he followeth not us; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us." No, replies the Master, "*forbid him not*; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me." This rebuke of the infinitely Wise One not only tells heavily against sectarian narrowness, but it admonishes us not to withdraw from "well-doing" even when some of our partners are not to our liking.

(3.) If personal effort stand first, then has combined effort also its place and time and field of action. Churches, Sabbath-schools, young people's associations and kindred organizations have the strength of variety in unity. There is a power in numbers when concentrated on one single point. Christ's regiments must always be ready

to combine under Christ's standard for Christ's battles. That old Jewish field-marshall Joab gave a good motto for modern Christians when he said to his brother Abishai, "If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me; but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee." In the face of such tremendous odds God's people must pull together, pray together, work together, fight together, until the "field of the world" is won for King Jesus.

(4.) Fourthly, Paul's exhortation to the brethren of his time, and of all time, is to unflagging steadfastness in well-doing. "Be not weary," never faint or give out. But weariness is seldom produced by hard honest work; it is *worry* that exhausts our strength. Work compacts the spiritual sinews and imparts a fresh glow and an appetite; worry turns the cheek pale and shatters the nerves. Work sharpens the blade, worry rusts it out. God promises to his servants "strength equal to the day," but not one extra ounce for to-morrow's duties, to-morrow's burdens or to-morrow's toils. Paul himself would have broken down if he had not rolled his anxieties and his troubles and his disappointments—yes, and the eternal destinies of the souls for whom he labored—over on the everlasting Arm.

(5.) Do not distress yourselves because you see not immediately the fruits of your spiritual labors. Duties and deeds are ours; results are God's. Faint not in the well-doing, for in due season we shall reap. We have God's bond for that, and the harvest-hour is hid with him.

(6.) Finally, it is not only for others, but for yourselves, that the utmost diligence is required. Does your store, your farm or your shop demand it? How much more does your never-dying soul! If it requires patient

industry to be a successful merchant, a tidy housekeeper, a good farmer or successful teacher, still more industry is required to be a well-built Christian. To relieve the suffering and to cast gospel-salt into foul and fetid spots; to launch and to man schemes of personal beneficence; to put life into secret prayer and vigor into public duties; to get low before the cross in humility and up into thankful and blessed communion with God; to conquer lawless appetites and weed out besetting sins; to master the Bible and be able to teach it to others; to turn many to righteousness, and thus win the diadem of stars; to glorify your Master and yield much fruit,—ah! *here* is a field for your utmost and intensest diligence. Never weary, I entreat thee, in this well-doing.

Would you turn toils into triumphs? Would you end up the grand battle of life with splendid victory? Would you pilot deathless souls to glory? Then put Christ into everything, and everything for Christ!

“ Think not of rest: though dreams be sweet,
Start up and ply your heavenward feet.
Is not God’s oath upon your head,
Ne’er to sink back on slothful bed?
Never again your loins untie?
Nor let your torches waste and die,
Till where the shadows thickest fall
Ye hear your Master’s midnight call?”

SECOND QUARTER

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

BY THE REV. ARTHUR T. PIERSON, D. D.

April 6.—Acts 18: 23-28 and 19: 1-7.

PAUL's life was logic and love, fired by the Holy Ghost. Though already "Paul the aged," he starts on a third and last tour for the purpose of confirming, edifying and strengthening all the disciples.

This journey occupied about four years. During the whole time Timothy seems to have been with him, and during part of the time Titus or Luke. The starting-point of the tour was Syrian Antioch; Illyricum, beyond Macedonia, its western limit, and Jerusalem its final goal.

Paul's travels thus swept round a constantly-widening circle. His first missionary journey touched the northern parts of Syria and the southern borders of Asia Minor; his second tour reached the Macedonian towns that bordered the *Ægean*; and now his third grand circuit pierces even beyond the mountains of the interior to the Adriatic.

To this entire journey, with its complex movements, the lesson before us supplies a key. It introduces us to *Apollos* the Alexandrian, the most important character brought to Paul's notice during the tour; it conducts us to *Ephesus*, the Ionian capital, which was the working-

centre during the major part of this circuit; and it illustrates that *curacy of souls* which lifts this heroic apostle to the high dignity of the unmitred and untitled bishop of the widely-scattered Gentile Church.

Apollos was a native of Alexandria, that city of Lower Egypt the name and fame of which are alike historic. Founded by the great Macedonian conqueror about three centuries before Christ, largely peopled by colonies of Greeks and Jews, the commercial centre between the East and the West, it became in extent and wealth second only to Rome, within a circumference of fifteen miles containing a population of more than half a million.

Under the Ptolemies its splendor became regal and added one more to the "golden ages" of history; Greece, Rome and the far Orient sent their sages thither to be taught; the imperial museum and library of seven hundred thousand volumes were established. Here was composed that Greek or Alexandrine version of the Old Testament known as the "Septuagint," or work of the Seventy. The very plan of this magnificent capital seemed to mark it for the field of Christian triumphs, for he who from mid-air could have looked down upon the city might have seen two grand avenues, each two thousand feet broad, intersecting each other at right angles, extending over the entire length and breadth of the city, and thus signing it with the very "sign of the cross" on a colossal scale. This city of Apollos was actually the fourth of the primitive centres of Christianity.

Apollos was doubtless one of those who in himself combined the Hebrew and the Hellenist, learned in the Greek language and master of the Septuagint. Mighty in the Scriptures, eloquent of speech, he blended logic and love—was both wise and winning, and could both convince and persuade.

It is not wholly clear what we are to understand by his "knowing only the baptism of John;" yet the very labyrinth of this lesson lies in this question, and it is important that we get hold of the clew, since Apollos and these "Ephesian disciples" both belong in the same category. They all seem to have been "believers" and "instructed in the way of the Lord," yet alike unbaptized into the name of the Lord Jesus and unacquainted with the Holy Ghost.

The solution of this enigma is one upon which even the best commentators do not agree. Some think that Apollos and these Ephesians had known of John Baptist's testimony to the Messiah, and perhaps of the leading facts of our Lord's life and ministry, but had not learned of Calvary's cross, the rent sepulchre, the glorious resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost. According to this view, Apollos would be, at the best, only an eloquent expounder of Old-Testament prophecy as *about to be fulfilled*, without any grand testimony to the *history* of that life and death and resurrection without which the gospel would be a gospel not of faith, but only of hope.

Such an interpretation is unnecessary and unreasonable. Was Apollos only the echo of that "voice" which in the Judean deserts cried, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord"? Those were not days of swift posts when "the news" sped on its way yoked to steam or the lightning; but the camel or the elephant could have borne the tidings of the resurrection glory and the Pentecostal gift from Jerusalem to Alexandria in ten days, and the waters of the Mediterranean could have floated it there in as short a time. It is scarce possible that, notwithstanding the already widespread tidings of a risen Redeemer and the tongues of fire, Apollos and these Ephesians were

simply blind followers of that last seer who spake of One that "should come," yet had himself a little later seen and known the Messiah, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God."

It seems, rather, that Apollos taught, and these disciples believed, that Jesus had come as the Christ, and as the Lamb of God had taken away the sin of the world—that they knew those leading facts of the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and, more vaguely perhaps, the descent of the Spirit. But the only "baptism" they knew was that of John, "with water, unto repentance;" they had not been baptized into Christ, the symbol of justification; and, though renewed by the Spirit, they had not yet that baptism of the Holy Ghost which in those days added to the heavenly graces of believers miraculous gifts.

Apollos was a "catechumen as to the way of the Lord" (*κατηγγενεος*, Acts 18:25); he needed fuller and more exact knowledge of the divine plan of salvation by that baptism into Christ which symbolizes our incorporation into him; he was rather "under the law" than "under grace," lingering amid the shadows of the old economy instead of stepping boldly into the full day-dawn of the new. The Day-star had not yet risen in his heart. And so Aquila and Priscilla, tent-makers as they were, turned their lodging-place into a primitive theological seminary for the sake of a single student, and expounded unto Apollos the way of God more perfectly.

These "certain disciples" found by Paul at the Ionian capital seem to have been in the same state with Apollos; possibly they had been his disciples. They had believed and confessed Jesus as the Messiah, but they were strangers to the wonder-working witness of the Holy Ghost. They had been baptized with John's baptism,

unto repentance, but of that other baptism of Jesus, that mysterious, supernatural baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire, of which John prophesied and which Pentecost had so literally fulfilled, they knew nothing. As Bishop Pearson maintains, we have no need to press the language used concerning them to its literal extreme: they doubtless knew of the *existence*, but not of the plentiful effusion and divine endowments, of the blessed Spirit.

Thus viewed, this lesson lifts us to a lofty summit of prospect. We are permitted to scan a broader horizon than is included within the narrow limits of a literal exposition, and introduced to a wide sphere of thought and practical application. This passage in the book of the Acts indirectly flames with a rebuke of that which, throughout the nominal Church of Christ, is the main cause and proof of the low level of piety which prevails—namely, the *practical ignorance of the Holy Ghost* on the part of believers.

Redemption is an arch whose two great supporting pillars are *the work of Christ* and *the work of the Spirit*. By the work of Christ is meant what he *has done for us* in his life, death and resurrection; by the work of the Spirit is meant what he *is doing in us* by his presence and power. Not to understand the former is to make impossible an intelligent faith and hope; and not to realize the latter is to make impossible rapid growth in holiness and happiness, sanctification and service.

It is a well-known fact that not a few expositors and a large number of eminent saints have held that this theme may have a more vital relation to church-life than has commonly been believed. We are told by the evangelist Mark (16:17-20) that the last words of our Lord embraced a pledge or promise of supernatural signs fol-

lowing them that should believe. "In my name," said he, "shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." And the evangelist does not close his sublime gospel testimony until he has added the historic confirmation which set its seal to this wondrous promise: "And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word, with signs following. Amen."

It has been generally assumed, though without any direct warrant from Scripture, that the *charismata* here promised by our Lord, and for an indefinite period actually bestowed on the early Church, were special miraculous gifts, limited to a brief time, because meant for the specific purpose of confirming the word by a divine testimony. The soundest commentators have said that the foundation was thus laid in a supernatural way that no reasonable doubt might henceforth hinder full faith in the gospel, and that when the time came that the foundation was complete the miraculous signs ceased, because no need existed for building into the structure itself the huge granite blocks of a direct divine witness, such as were necessary as a basis and support upon which the whole should rest.

It is to be observed, however, that in the original promise there was no hint of such limitation of time. The command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," was not more unlimited as to the time during which it was to be obeyed than was the accompanying promise as to the time during which it was to be enjoyed. In fact, the idea of a designed limit was an *afterthought*, by which, after the supernatural signs ceased, the discontinuance of them was explained. And

so, in their absence, the believing people of God have solaced themselves with the persuasion that the Lord is still "with them" as before; only the mode of manifestation of his presence is changed to one more fitted to the existing needs of his Church and the world.

We hesitate not to affirm our solemn confidence that our Lord's primary design was that the rapid and worldwide preaching of the gospel should be accompanied with signs of his presence as the unceasing confirmation of the word. Who shall dare affirm that such design has ever been changed, or that no supernatural signs are now attending the preaching of the gospel? It may indeed be true that the manifest decline of early evangelistic activity, which was attended by the rapid decay of evangelical doctrine and life, may also have caused a suspension of the Spirit's wonder-working power; that the Church was left to an "interregnum of faith;" and that even now unbelief limits God so far as it exists. But the supernatural energy of God is as truly shown in the *spiritual* as in the physical or material sphere; and in the spiritual sphere *it has always attended the faithful preaching and teaching of Jesus as the Christ, and always will!* Such signs as those found in the regeneration and transformation of character by the Holy Spirit are full as mighty proofs of God's power as giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf or life to the dead.

Such signs meet a permanent need as co-witnesses to Christ's gospel. When Peter and John departed from the presence of the council that laid bare its red right arm of persecution, those threatened disciples went to their own company, and, lifting up their voice with one accord, that group of praying believers said, "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants that *with all boldness they may speak thy word, by*

stretching forth thine hand to heal ; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy Holy Child, Jesus." They felt the need of confirmatory signs to give them boldness in preaching, and prayed God to establish his own word by his own power.

Have none of us ever felt a similar need ? and is not God always ready to meet that need ? Let us read the words of Isaiah (55 : 13) : " Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree ; and instead of the brier, shall come up the myrtle tree ; and it shall be to the Lord for a name ; for an *everlasting sign* that shall not be cut off." Here, then, is God's *everlasting sign*, the perpetual miracle of the ages. As the power of husbandry is shown in displacing the most noxious and offensive growths by the most beautiful, fragrant and serviceable plants and trees, so God exhibits his supernatural power by displacing in the soil of the human heart and of human society the most ugly and hurtful opinions, affections and practices by the most attractive, lovely and useful products of his gracious culture.

Christlieb may well affirm that " in the history of modern missions we find many wonderful occurrences which unmistakably remind us of the apostolic age." We believe that transformations of personal character, and indeed of whole communities, by the power of the gospel, constitute an " *everlasting sign* " of supernatural energy not less conclusive and convincing than any miracles of the apostolic age. The discerning eye of the careful, candid student of modern history can see God's pillar of cloud and of fire still going before his Israel, opening doors great and effectual to the Gentile world, and effecting for his missionaries an entrance to the very heart of pagandom as wonderful as the parting of the waters of the Red Sea and of Jordan or the pros-

tration of Jericho's walls. Nothing short of supernatural power could have turned that lion, Africander, into a lamb, or subdued that ferocious Koord, Guergis, or transfigured that Karen slave, Sau Quala, into a self-denying apostle of missions.

The results of modern missionary labor are inexplicable without the supernatural factor. In seven years Johnson saw that Sierra-Leone mass of disgusting humanity, that seemed scarce worth saving, organized into a Christian state with happy homes, family piety, industries and learned professions, schools, courts of law and churches of Christ. So William Duncan reared his "Metlakhatla" among the Indians of British Columbia. The Hawaiian Islands and Madagascar; the Fiji group, turned from horrible cannibalism to a habitation of nearly a thousand Christian churches; those "ten years" of Wheeler on the Euphrates; that "lone star" mission at Ongole, with its ten thousand converts within three months,—these are some of God's *modern signs* that he is still "with us alway" as we preach his gospel.

The drift of the age is toward doubt, if not denial, of the Holy Ghost, and toward a cold, bleak, barren *naturalism*, that resolves the inspiration of the Scriptures into the inspiration of genius; the incarnation into an impersonation of goodness; the atonement into a human martyrdom; regeneration into a reformation of morals and manners. This naturalism can be met successfully only as disciples have deep practical knowledge and experience within their own hearts of the presence and power of the Holy Ghost.

There are important bearings of this grand theme which trench on no doubtful ground. Throughout the body of nominal disciples there are still, after eighteen centuries of Christian history, a most lamentable igno-

rance of the Holy Ghost and little practical experience of his power. What pastor has not sometimes been asked by a candid but doubting disciple, who has "not heard whether there be a Holy Ghost or no," whether "he really believes in the Holy Ghost as a person"? Even to thousands who profess to believe in him he is no more than to a famous preacher of one of our great cities, "a thin and shadowy effluence proceeding from the Father and the Son," having no more definite personality than the breath which exhales from the body.

Let us, as we close the consideration of this suggestive lesson, look at the theme without regard to arbitrary and textual limitations. A believer may be the actual subject of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, and yet be both ignorant and destitute of that glorious supplemental experience which, succeeding conversion, sanctifies, seals and anoints for service.

The believer's relation to the Holy Spirit of God needs to be made emphatic by constant repetition. That relation is complex and includes several things.

First of all, simple *salvation*. The Spirit applies the word for our instruction, taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto us; he also applies the blood of Christ for cleansing, taking away our sin and guilt. Thus comes the new birth of regeneration, the creation of a new nature with holy affections and affinities.

Secondly, *sanctification*. Under his gracious culture the new nature develops more and more. He waters the seed which he plants till the "blade" grows to the "ear" and the "full-grown corn in the ear." The child, divinely begotten, he teaches to *talk*, prattling "Abba," "Father;" to *walk* in the light, love and life of God; and to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ and become a perfect man. The certainty and

rapidity of this spiritual growth depends on our practical, personal acquaintance with the Holy Ghost. Whether we grow at all, and how fast if at all, will be determined by our treatment of the Spirit.

Thirdly, *service*. Power of effective witness to Christ is a divine endowment and endowment. This was the special gift of Pentecost: the Spirit was poured out from on high in a glorious chrism or anointing of power; the tongues of disciples became tongues of fire and their words became burning words. The subsequent "laying on of hands," in connection with which the Holy Ghost was given to believers, was a symbol of this chrism. Here was the secret of primitive success in preaching. Much of it was unstudied, simple "talking about" Jesus, but it burned its way like fire; it was pervasive and penetrative like fragrance. That "anointing" is the greatest need of the Church to-day—the "unction" which gives power (*δυναμις*), and makes our preaching, teaching, testifying a *dynamic force*, moving and moulding human hearts.

Oh for some Aquila and Priscilla to lead young disciples, and even ministers of the word, to a more perfect knowledge of the way of God and the work of the Spirit! There are "masters in Israel" who know not these things—who, if they candidly confess the truth, must own that they have little practical knowledge of the sanctifying and anointing power of the Holy Ghost. How great a chrism of blessing would come with the study of this Scripture lesson if, as the Christian world is so largely united in its consideration, there might go up to God one unutterable groaning for another and grander Pentecost, shaking the very places of assembly, and giving to all disciples the fiery tongue which combines in itself the light that illuminates and the warmth that subdues!

PAUL AT EPHESUS.

BY PROF. SAMUEL J. WILSON, D.D.

April 13.—Acts 19:18.

AT Ephesus, Paul found many things which were common to that city and to the other Gentile cities which he had visited, yet there were peculiar conditions attending his work there which he had not found in Antioch, in Athens or in Corinth. Let us therefore study—

- I. THE FIELD;
- II. THE WORKER AND THE WORK;
- III. THE RESULTS OF THE WORK.

I. THE FIELD.

Ephesus, the capital of Proconsular Asia, situated on the highway of travel and commerce between Rome and the Orient, was the most important city of Asia Minor. It had been founded by a colony from Athens, and after a varied history was, at the time of the apostle's ministry, a brilliant centre of wealth, commerce, art, learning and luxury. In it there was a mingling of some of the most characteristic elements of Hellenic civilization. Here was the celebrated temple of Diana, one of the wonders of the world, which had been centuries in building, with lavish expenditure of treasure furnished by all Asia, women contributing their choicest jewels that the work should be carried forward. Its one hundred and twenty-seven pillars of Parian marble, each pillar the gift of a

king, and each perfect in form, proportion and collocation, made up a picture of surpassing grace and beauty. Within the temple masterpieces of the greatest Greek artists were profusely displayed, and the pillars were hung with rich votive offerings from all parts of the world. Behind the altar, which the genius of Praxiteles had adorned, stood the disgusting image of Diana, which was said to have fallen from heaven. Never did so much beauty enshrine ugliness that was so grotesque. Crowds of priests, priestesses and slaves kept the temple and conducted the abominable orgies which the goddess was supposed to accept as worship. So inviolable was the sanctity of the temple that a room within it was used as a depository for valuables, and untold wealth was there deposited as the safest place in the world. The right of asylum, which belonged to the shrine of the goddess, included a part of the city, thus making it a retreat of outlaws and desperadoes. In Ephesus was also found the largest theatre ever erected by the Greeks, having seats for fifty thousand spectators. Not far from the theatre was the race-course, where were witnessed the foot-races, wrestling-matches, gladiatorial fights and the exposure of men to the wild beasts. From the theatre and the arena Paul drew some of his most striking illustrations. Another centre of interest in Ephesus was the market-place, where peoples, costumes and products of all kinds were seen amidst lively and varied incidents.

At all seasons of the year such a city would attract crowds of visitors, but the entire month of May was observed as a festival in honor of Diana of the Ephesians. Honored and influential citizens were chosen to preside over the ceremonies of this great festival, these officers bearing the title "chiefs of Asia." From all parts of the land, from cities, towns, villages and obscure

rural places, came men, women and children, pouring in crowds along the highways, covering the wharves, filling the streets, eager to witness the pomp, the splendor, the sports, the games and the excitements of this month-long holiday. During this time the streets, the porticos, the theatre, the race-course, the Odeon and the market-place would be thronged with people of all races and of all religions. It is not strange that Paul "*tarried at Ephesus, for a great door and effectual was opened unto him.*"

Ephesus was distinguished for its fanatical devotion to Diana, the proud city esteeming it the highest honor to be represented on coins as the "temple-sweeper" to the goddess. The community was rife with magical arts, charms and "signs and lying wonders." Here Apollonius of Tyana had held forth, and this was the scene of one of his pretended miracles. The manufacture of shrines and images of Diana was quite an important industry and brought in a large revenue. To such a city of teeming population, of wild fanaticisms, of gross superstitions, Paul came to preach the gospel. It was a great and varied field for missionary operations.

II. THE WORKER AND THE WORK.

During his second missionary circuit, while on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem, the apostle had stopped for a short time at Ephesus, had preached in the synagogue, and had excited so much interest by his preaching that he had been importuned to remain and continue his ministry. It being impossible for him then to comply with this request, he promised to return and spend some time with the Ephesians.

On his third circuit he returned to Ephesus by way of Galatia and Phrygia, "the upper coasts." During his absence Apollos, the versatile and eloquent Alexandrian

Jew, had preached in the synagogue, had been the guest of Aquila and Priscilla, and had now gone to Antioch, bearing credentials from the brethren at Ephesus. Apollos, knowing, at first, only "the baptism of John," became the pupil as well as the guest of Aquila and Priscilla, who "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." Aquila and his wife had been compelled to leave Rome under the decree of the emperor Claudius, by which all Jews were expelled from that city. Aquila, being by occupation a tent-maker, went to Antioch to ply his trade, and there the apostle Paul met this couple with whom he was so intimately associated afterward, and, being of the same craft, he lived and wrought with them. When Paul left Corinth on his way to Jerusalem, Aquila and Priscilla accompanied him as far as to Ephesus, where they remained. When he returned to Ephesus the apostle again took up his abode with them, and worked with them at their common calling. The worker is now in the midst of the teeming harvest-field.

His first labor in this field of which we have an account was his instructing the twelve disciples who confessed their ignorance of the office and work of the Holy Ghost. He led them beyond the baptism of John to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and to a knowledge of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and, having thus instructed them, baptized them, and by the laying on of hands imparted to them the gift of tongues and of prophecy.

The apostle then, according to his custom as well as in fulfillment of a promise, began to preach in the synagogue; and here "he spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God." His theme was the gospel, the establishment of the kingdom of God, the new dispensation—a theme of which he never tired. His manner of

speech was bold—the boldness which is begotten of assurance. It was no vain confidence of self-assertion, but the confidence which is the result of an unfaltering faith in the great verities of the gospel. His method was doctrinal, scriptural, exegetical, analytical and argumentative. He proved to the Jews from their own Scriptures that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. It was a hot, hand-to-hand contest. Every point was questioned, denied, gainsaid. For three months this keen and exciting struggle went on; and here, as elsewhere and everywhere, the truth which was the means of salvation to some became the means of hardening and of increased enmity in others. “Divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude.” But the work had precious results, for when, after three months, he withdrew from the synagogue, he “*separated the disciples.*” This was the beginning of the apostle’s public ministry in Ephesus.

He next occupied the school of “one Tyrannus.” Here he continued for two years. To the preaching of the apostle in this place the Gentiles would come more readily than to the synagogue, while many Jews would also be among his hearers. Here he was “disputing daily;” that is, reasoning, answering objections and proving from prophecy the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. In confirmation of his ministry “God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul; so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.”

Magic, sorcery, incantations and exorcisms of all kinds were professed and practiced at Ephesus. Charms and signs, mystic words and letters, senseless combinations of meaningless sounds, were supposed to be efficacious

in the curing of diseases and potent in the warding off of evils. "The Ephesian letters" were mysterious symbols of this kind, deriving their sacredness from the fact that they were engraved on the statue of Diana. These letters were used as charms. Professors of this art were numerous. An immense literature on these subjects had been created. Libraries were written on various charms and incantations and on the manner and occasions of their use, and fortunes were made by the sale of these books. The Jews were especially addicted to exorcism. Among a populace so credulous and superstitious Apollonius Tyanæus found a sympathetic audience when he put forth his claims to magical powers. In this community, so addicted to magic, "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul." The manifestation of miraculous powers was adapted to the peculiar circumstances of the time, the place and the situation. In Egypt, Moses and Aaron were confronted by the magicians of Pharaoh, in order that these might be discomfited in their own sphere and be compelled to say, "This is the finger of God." So at Ephesus to the false claims of magicians, exorcists and impostors were opposed genuine miraculous powers in special manifestations. Handkerchiefs or aprons which had been used by the apostle in his daily toil as a tent-maker, or these articles belonging to others and brought in contact with the body of the apostle, were carried to the sick and afflicted, who were in this way healed. The special feature of the case seems to have been the communication of the healing virtue apart from the personal presence and contact of the apostle.

Among the Jews the practice of magic ran largely to exorcism. They had charms and incantations which, according to popular belief, had been handed down from Solomon. The root of a certain plant which had been

prescribed by Solomon was placed under the seal of a ring, and this ring being held to the nose of the demoniac, the scent of the herb was supposed to drive out the evil spirit, while the recital of certain incantations secured the patient against a return of the malady. This superstition pervaded all classes of the Jews, for we find that Sceva, a priest, had seven sons who traveled about from place to place deceiving the people and enriching themselves by these pretended exorcisms. These men, hearing of the cures which had been wrought by Paul, would naturally conclude that in the abundance of his learning the apostle had discovered some name or incantation which was even more potent than the name or incantation of Solomon. In the spirit of Simon Magus they wished to make gain out of these miraculous powers, and consequently attempted to exorcise by calling the "name of Jesus whom Paul preacheth." But the maniac upon whom the exorcism was attempted seems to have detected the baseness of their motives, and in a frenzy exclaimed, "Jesus I know, Paul I know; but who are ye?" Whereupon, with the strength and unbridled fury of a maniac, he rushed upon them, tearing and wounding them, so that they fled in dismay. As in Egypt the magicians were compelled to acknowledge a power above and beyond their magic, and as the sceptres of the Egyptian gods were broken by the power of Jehovah, so in Asia, when "this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus, fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."

Besides his public ministrations, Paul "taught from house to house, with all humility of mind and with many tears." He did not depend upon his public discussions, nor upon his preaching, nor upon the special miracles wrought by God in his behalf, but carried the gospel to

the homes and the hearts of men. The kingdom of God is extended by personal contact of mind with mind, of heart with heart—by the direct application of the truth to the individual conscience. The most effective work of the pastor and of the Sabbath-school teacher is accomplished in this way.

Amidst these arduous labors Paul worked at his trade with Aquila. "Coveting no man's silver or gold or apparel, his hands ministered unto his own necessities and to them that were with him." He was willing to undergo hardships in order to have the opportunity of preaching the gospel. In view of the results and of the reward he did not regard them as hardships. And all this was done amidst constant danger. Assassins were lying in wait for him at every turn. So great and constant was the peril that in writing to the Corinthians from Ephesus he could solemnly protest that he "died daily," and that his life was in as imminent jeopardy as though he fought with wild beasts in the amphitheatre. And all this, moreover, while he was suffering from physical infirmity, for whatever "the thorn in the flesh" may have been, it is certain that it caused him intense and exhausting pain, that it made him a charge to his friends, and that the effects of it rendered him repulsive in appearance. His sufferings from this affliction must have been fearful, or one so brave and uncomplaining, one who could endure stonings and scourgings with heroism, would not have used such terms to describe it as "the thorn in the flesh," "a messenger of Satan to buffet him." Although so great a sufferer, yet by those who knew him in the intimacies of home-life and of daily toil and trial he was loved with romantic devotion. Of Aquila and Priscilla, who thus knew him, he testifies that they "for his life laid down their own necks;" and he declared that the

Galatians, "if it had been possible, would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him." At Miletus the elders of Ephesus at parting from him "wept sore, and fell on his neck and kissed him." He who loves his work will be loved for his work's sake.

III. THE RESULTS OF THE WORK.

It is worthy of remark that Paul labored in the great cities, in the teeming centres of life—Antioch, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus—and from these centres the gospel was carried to the ends of the earth. As the result of the labors of Paul in Ephesus, "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." A strong and vigorous church was established there. The gospel exerted its power silently but resistlessly in the great and wicked city in overthrowing idolatry, in bringing into contempt arts of magic and sorcery, and in lifting men from the abyss of pagan pollutions to the purity of Christian doctrine and life. Among the converts were those who had used magic arts, and who had secretly continued the practice after they had become Christians; but these were constrained to "confess and show their deeds. And many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men." The occult sciences which had been their pride, and the volumes in which were written the mysterious secrets of those sciences, had been shown to be only fables and lies. All magical arts and practices were renounced, and volumes of magical lore, the value of which, according to the prices current, aggregated a large sum of money, were publicly burned. There were great difficulties in the way of the spread of the gospel in Ephesus. Bitter and formidable opposition was to be encountered, but the simple power of the truth overcame

all obstacles. The frantic cries of worshipers of Diana, kept up for the space of two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" could not avail to arrest the power of the truth. By public and private teaching disciples were instructed and edified, sinners were converted and "gainsayers were convinced." Oppositions and apparent hindrances were overruled "for the furtherance of the gospel." The great temple became a ruin from which was quarried many a pillar and column to adorn Christian churches, and then the ruin was covered over deep with mud and slime, so that its very site was unknown until within a few years the pick and shovel of the explorer brought it to light again. "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty."

In carrying forward his work the Lord uses means which are direct and indirect— influences political and social, forces which act and react and interact; so that movements which are slight in themselves, being perpetuated and transmitted, and entering into the vast system of providential administration, become potent factors in human history and human destiny. From Aquila and Priscilla, Paul heard of the church at Rome. As these two men wrought side by side at the daily toil as tent-makers, the one communicated and the other received the intelligence which resulted in the apostle's great desire to visit Rome, and in his writing the Epistle to the Romans. From that lowly workbench what hallowed influences have gone forth! And so now from pulpit, from Sabbath-school class and from hearthstone issue influences which shall ever increase in effective power for good as the ages go on.

PAUL'S PREACHING.

BY THE REV. JAMES EELLS, D.D.

April 20.—1 Cor. 1: 17-31.

THE divisions among the converts in Corinth rendered it necessary, in the judgment of Paul, that he should distinctly define the spirit by which he had been moved and the great truths which he had urged in his preaching of the gospel to them. He had no ambition to have his own name prominent, nor would he detract from the prominence of Apollos or Cephas; but he was anxious, and besought them by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who should be made supreme whether preached by one or by another, that they "all speak the same thing, and there be no divisions among them; but that they be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Whatever might be true of his servants, the Corinthians should be assured that Christ is not divided, and that he only was crucified for them. Therefore they should be baptized only in his name, and bear this among their heathen friends as the only name whereby they could be saved.

In justification of himself and what he had preached to them, he then proceeded to state what were the characteristics of his preaching, and to give some reasons why he had so presented the gospel during his stay in Corinth. We shall be wise if we study carefully what he says on

so vital a subject, since there has never been a preacher of the gospel more profound, more evangelical or more successful than he.

First. Paul's preaching exalted the cross of Christ as the central element of the gospel.

In the next chapter of this letter he said to them that he "determined not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" and in this lesson he declared that he preached Christ crucified as the power of God to those who are saved, while he insisted that whatever might attend this, it should be so presented that the cross of Christ should not be made of none effect. It is manifest that the apostle does not teach by such language that truths associated with the details of Christian belief and living are not proper themes for the pulpit, but that the great theme around which all others cluster, and which must give their value to all others, is the sacrifice of Christ as the Saviour of men. We are not to understand that he regarded ritualistic observances as of no importance, for he associated these with the gospel and the Church in all his missionary service; but his chief commission was not to baptize, but to preach the gospel. We are not to understand that he considered as naught the human wisdom, seen both in logic and skill, by which his preaching would be rendered more effective, but that this exhibition could not be the sum of the Christian minister's duty; nor could his ambition be satisfied with such a display of knowledge or power. The gospel as the power of God and the wisdom of God, the gospel as the means of help and salvation revealed by God, though it might be regarded as weakness and foolishness by men, was everywhere the burden of his message, leaving to Him who charged him with it the proof that the

foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

The men of Corinth have not remained alone in the exaltation of religious rites and ritualistic forms till their proper observance is believed to have close relation to salvation; nor has the necessity passed to reaffirm, to those who profess to preach, Paul's assurance that all these are worthless except to those who have first received the crucified Christ as the sole ground of their hope. In our own time many who would be greatly offended were a doubt expressed that they are Christians really rest their hope in some external service or church rite or association, rather than in the trust of the heart which isolates him who feels it, and causes him to exclaim, as Paul did when he looked upon the cross and its victim, "He loved me and gave himself for me," and in him "God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

In our own time there are ministers who place philosophy above the Bible, and human wisdom above the wisdom of God as to the means of salvation, as completely as did the Jews and Greeks who withheld Paul. The tendency among us is to undervalue Christ—at least, to disesteem his cross. Some other way to heaven, some other method for winning God's favor, something else in place of simple appropriating faith and true obedience,—these are the problems that engage the young and old, the learned and the unlearned. Hence, with an emphasis which saving truth when questioned should ever receive, we should press this central element of the great apostle's preaching, that there is salvation in no other than the crucified Christ. Neither church observances nor creeds, nor man's philosophy nor preference, nor any decree of council nor reason, can become a substitute

for this essential truth. In every age, to every sinner, while the world stands, it hath pleased God that by the preaching of this truth he will save them that believe. And were angel or man to preach any other gospel than this, the condemnation pronounced by Paul in his letter to the Galatians would rest upon him.

Second. His preaching made the agency of God essential in causing the cross of Christ to have saving power.

Paul gives the reason of man its proper place in the apprehension of the truth, and the truth so apprehended its proper place as connected with regeneration; but he never teaches that the truth alone, however fully understood, will secure salvation. Being saved is not an intellectual process only, even though the sacrifice of Christ be the truth considered. Only when made the power of God through the attending influence of the Holy Ghost does it save. Under his influence the sinner not only receives and understands, but believes and appropriates, the sacrifice on the cross. It will be all foolishness or an unnecessary display of divine interest until the soul is convinced of the need of such a Saviour and the heart is moved to trust in him.

In this particular the apostle's preaching differed widely from that now often heard. We are told that the path of life is parallel and near to the path in which we are walking, and that when we learn this, and are disposed to do so, we may step from one to the other. We are told that Eden as the home of those approved of God is not inaccessible to any, but whenever we will we may pass through its gates into the full possession of all that the holy may enjoy. We are told that a change of heart is only this: that whereas we have been going north, we resolve that we will go south; that becoming good men is

only the conviction that we have been bad men; that saving faith in Christ is only the belief that he is the Saviour. Paul taught that salvation is much more than this, and that all this is of no value as related to salvation until the added power of God transforms the heart. All that is subjective in the change by which one becomes a Christian is effected by God's Spirit moving the feelings, enlightening the mind, swaying the will and making the man to be a new creature. How this is done need not be determined. That it is done is a matter of consciousness, and the renewal is manifest in the motives by which he is governed and in the life he leads. This is what is meant by the declaration that the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. He renders spiritually effective what was before only intellectually perceived. He gives power to the truth which had before only been admitted, and the Saviour of the world becomes the personal Saviour of the penitent and trusting soul. No other preaching of the cross of Christ can result in salvation.

Third. His preaching insisted that this divine agency can render the weak able to appropriate the gospel in its saving power.

The Jews and Greeks, the wise, the scribe, the disputers of this world, were not forbidden to hope, but they were told that what they deemed of so much importance was not enough; and to confirm this they were told that the foolish and the weak and the low and the despised in their esteem could, through the power and wisdom of God, have grace to be saved. The pride of high station and marked ability would not avail, but the humility of confessed unworthiness and dependence upon him would attract God's favor and incline its possessor to accept the

Saviour he has provided. Hence, the poor, the ignorant, the wicked, the child, will find no barriers around the cross when they turn toward it for help. The cry of need, of utter dependence, heard from any direction and any soul, comes into the ear of Him who waits to be gracious, so that it becomes the condition on which his power is granted. The teaching is, therefore, that while there is an open way for all, none will be saved because of this truth, nor because they think themselves able to walk in this way alone, nor because they are so strong that they will tax but little the strength that is offered them. It is not our ability, but our weakness; not our self-righteousness, but our confession of guilt; not our hold upon God, but his hold upon us,—that must be our ground of hope from the moment when we bow at the foot of the cross till we are received into glory. This is a most cheering truth that Paul preached, especially for those who either teach or learn in Sunday-schools. This work need not be all educational or bearing only on the future. It may bear fruit at once in the conversion of the little ones as well as the more advanced, and in our mission-schools as well as those directly connected with our churches. The divine power attending the truth is a constant occasion for hope, and it will be with us for ever.

Fourth. His preaching insisted that this divine agency can make even the weak useful in overthrowing opposition and causing the gospel to triumph.

We need to remember the relative position of those to whom Paul was speaking that we may appreciate the significance to them of this gracious declaration. They were a little company of ordinary persons in the midst of a great and gay and brilliant city. They would be called to defend their new and despised religion when

opposed to the prejudices and desires and habits and education of the mass of their fellow-citizens, and to the philosophy and wisdom and conceit of those who ridiculed it as foolishness, and with oracular, high-sounding authority denounced both their sentiments and their faith. The wise men and the mighty and the noble were to be encountered by them, and the presumption was all against success. The natural exclamation of the disciples when commanded to feed the five thousand with the handful of food intended for a boy's lunch, "What are these among so many?" or of Paul when gaining a slight apprehension of the duties of a minister, "*Who* is sufficient for these things?" might fairly illustrate their feelings when left as the representatives and defenders of the gospel in such a position as this.

The same has been essentially true of many a Christian since, and is true now of the Church when contemplating the commission of her Head respecting the evangelization of the world. And there would be abundant occasion for such distrust were only the apparent state of the case to be considered. The comparison is all against us still. As they estimate themselves, or as the world estimates them, "not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called" even now, yet success and triumph are to be expected, and they are sure, because "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base [or low] things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are." *God* hath chosen, and God works with those who stand for him and his gospel, and causes them to be mighty to the pulling down of strongholds. We are not taught by this that there is

no place for talent and learning and money in the promotion of the kingdom of heaven—that it is to be assumed that one is weak and foolish, according to all human estimates, who is a believer in Jesus and actively devoted to his cause. But we are taught that this kingdom is not dependent on the support and patronage of great men, and Jesus can make the fidelity and trust of real believers in whatever station to triumph over opposition. We should prepare ourselves to be as perfect instruments as possible for God's use, but none of us need refuse to be used because afraid that we are too weak to be of any service. God's attending power will make any of us useful where he gives us an opportunity to represent the real spirit of our religion; and its very exhibition will have effect.

Fifth. His preaching declared that the result of the gospel's proper presentation must be that God, and not men, will have all the glory.

It is no part of the purpose in the plan of grace that man shall be exalted, in the sense that selfishness shall be made prominent. The prime object in this plan is not even that man may be saved, but that God may be glorified in the salvation of man. Our Catechism states the truth we should ever make prominent, that, as he was created, and now that he is redeemed, "man's chief end is to glorify God," and that as he ever seeks this end will he be prepared to "enjoy him for ever." Of course, human ambition will ignore or oppose this sentiment, and self-interest in the individual, in the denomination, and sometimes in the civil government, will suggest other motives for effort to introduce or maintain and make effective the gospel of God's grace; but these motives should always be subordinate. The supreme good is

the divine glory, and the truly loyal find their highest honor and greatest joy in the service which never counts the cost if the King eternal may receive any praise.

Of the many inferences which might be made from the study of this lesson, only two will be formally presented:

(1.) Paul's preaching declares that true salvation is the penitent and trustful acceptance of the crucified Christ. This is the single, common ground of hope for sinners, whether high or low, learned or ignorant. No lost soul can afford to call God's sacrifice for sin foolishness, or to make the cross of Christ of none effect. The great man must bow at the foot of that cross as a little child, and the little child must bow by his side in the simplicity of his faith, while both alike avow their trust in Him who is thus made of God unto them redemption.

(2.) His preaching declares that true religion is loyalty to God. That too is to be the common, the universal, expression of the heart. Hence consecration is the sum of obligation, and fidelity is success. Indeed, while God takes no measure of quantity in estimating service, or of prominence attained among his fellows by the servant, he everywhere makes fidelity his test both of greatness and of worth. All are to merge their wills in God's will. All are to receive favor as only of grace. All are to lie as living sacrifices on God's altar. All are to count it joy if they may do all things for God's glory. We are to do what we can in any station and while we live. We are to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light;" and at last we are to come before his throne crying, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."

ABSTINENCE FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS.

BY THE REV. HANFORD A. EDSON, D. D.

April 27.—1 Cor. 8:1-13.

PSYCHOLOGY is neither local nor transient. One true map of the world will serve in all years and latitudes; so will one true map of mind. Remembering, imagining, willing, conscience, are the same in Corinth and Ephesus as in Yokohama or New York. In this chapter we are on familiar ground, therefore. The cases of conscience are peculiar, but the conscience itself is the arbiter in every man's breast.

At beautiful, luxurious Corinth—"Græciæ lumen," as Cicero calls it—the apostle Paul spent much time and encountered many discouragements. The recent converts to the Christian faith were imperiled by most alluring temptations. There were also smaller embarrassments. On every hand appeared altars and temples devoted to idolatry. Of the flesh of beasts slain by the heathen priests in the service of their gods only a portion being required for the religious rites, the remainder was consumed as food by the priests or exposed for sale in the public markets. Entertainments were sometimes given in localities more or less closely associated with the idolatrous worship, and these meats were offered to the guests. Was it right to partake of such food?

There may be at least four different methods of treating a question of that sort.

It may be determined merely upon considerations of personal inclination and enjoyment. "Those are the only considerations," some might say. "If the meat is good, and I want it, why refuse it?"

With others the case would be at once submitted to the judgment of society: "What is the custom? How do my associates dispose of the problem? Do my more fashionable friends venture to decline invitations to these feasts?"

A third and manifestly higher method asks, "What is right? What does an enlightened conscience approve?" Conduct which is indecent, dishonorable, hurtful to ourselves, must be at once condemned. But that which in itself is innocent we may allow. We may stand upon our individual liberties, and if we seek to avoid all that is absolutely wrong we shall owe to mankind no further debt.

Here are three entirely distinct methods of dealing with a question of practical morality. But neither of these schemes suits Paul. That which is agreeable, customary and abstractly right his conscience might, notwithstanding, thoroughly disapprove. There is a larger question of charity: "How might my habit affect others, and especially my religious associates?"

To the apostle this particular problem about meat seemed in itself an easy one. So far as he was concerned, if the food was wholesome he should feel quite free to put it on his table or partake of it as a guest. Among the Corinthian Christians, however, some were converts from idolatry. They naturally shrank with terror from anything that had aided, however remotely, a worship which they now abhorred. Others, though not

so affected, could scarcely reconcile it with their view of propriety even to touch what had been connected with a service so vile. Such Christians would be pained and hindered if they should see other disciples doing what to them appeared wrong. Promptly, therefore, Paul's decision was announced : "These brethren seem to me to have uninstructed consciences in this matter. I can perceive no essential wrong in eating such meat. If, however, meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth." *

(1.) In this golden sentence is seen the sensitiveness of Christianity with regard to the weak and the obscure.

Such a sentiment was practically new. "Christianity for the first time made charity a rudimentary virtue," says Lecky, the historian of European morals.

"There rises before us the image of a commonwealth in which a universal enthusiasm not only takes the place of law, but, by converting into a motive what was before but a passive restraint, enlarges the compass of morality and calls into existence a number of positive obligations which under the domain of law had not been acknowledged. It is a commonwealth sustained and governed by the desire existing in the mind of each of its members to do as much good as possible to every other member." Thus does Professor Seeley, in *Ecce Homo*, describe Christ's new society, mastered and moved by the "enthusiasm of humanity."

How strange was this method is apparent also from the early criticisms of Christianity—that of Celsus, for example. "Why," said he, "woolen-manufacturers, shoe-

* It is noticeable that the apostle makes no allusion here to a previous discussion of the same question. See Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25; cf. Num. 25:2; Ps. 106:28.

makers and curriers, the most uneducated and boorish of men, are zealous advocates of this religion!" By the apostle, however, the opprobrium was turned into a sort of boast: "Ye see your calling, brethren. . . . God hath chosen the weak things to confound the mighty." These "weak things" Paul never made the mistake of despising.

We, too, shall deal most successfully with similar cases of conscience when we are nearest to Paul's Master and ours, having most of his life in us, his mind of love. We shall then be less eager to defend our personal privileges, regarding all sacrifices of feeling or opinion or habit which might strengthen the feeblest member of the body of Christ as wholly insignificant. "How much can we, how much shall we, give up?" will become only a question as to how much we love. Many a boy proudly drops his bat and ball to run and serve his mother or his sister. Such surrenders love counts among its privileges and joys. And if the earthly affection can easily do this, is it likely that a mightier passion will fail? It does not fail. Christ gave himself for others, was glad to help the least of mankind. "It is enough for the servant that he be as his Lord."

(2.) We are taught, further, that the individual 's of less consequence than society.

That seems too plain to need reiteration. But practically it is not always acknowledged. Writers like Mill put the stress upon personal liberty. They are slow to justify legal measures or social laws which in any degree abridge the privileges of the individual. Such invasion of rights they would condemn, except under the greatest necessity. Statutes against drunkenness, gaming, Sabbath-breaking, profanity and the like they regard with suspicion. They seem to estimate a man too high and

mankind too low. At least, they fail to see where the highest advantage and real nobility of the individual are sure to lie.

But Providence does not make such estimates. What we call the laws of Nature constantly subordinate us to the general good. The progress of history is achieved through suffering and martyrdom. Father and mother must deny themselves for the family. Sons and brothers die that the republic may live. Science and invention go forward through unrequited sacrifices. The Church thrives upon self-denial. The body is more than the members, and is so regarded. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son."

In the fact that men have so often tried to reverse God's computations, and make the one to be worth more than the many, lies the secret of much of the misery of the human race. Along the lines of this vicious calculation rivers of blood have flowed. Think of the kings and princes who from thrones of gold have looked down upon the millions of their subjects only as the small dust of the balance. Think of the popes and prelates who have counted their own robes and dignities above the peace and purity of the Church. Or, rather, shall we not forget these victims of selfishness and pride, and consider him who counted not his "life dear" to himself, willing to be "all things to all men," if by all means he might "save some"?

(3.) It is also to be remembered that in the comparison of these opposite methods, and in determining the issues which they involve, is to be found an important element of education.

Instead of the Ten Commandments and this new Eleventh Commandment of love, there might have been a rule

for every word and move. Close by each interrogation-point a period might have been carefully set down. The constantly-recurring question, "Shall I eat this meat?" might have been attended by a constantly-recurring and indubitable Yes or No. Such, however, is not God's plan. We must judge and choose for ourselves. The settlement of moral questions to which we are daily summoned is designed for our discipline, a means both of testing and increasing our love for the Master and for his people. With a child we are best satisfied not when he promptly obeys an express command, but when, left to choose for himself, he deliberately prefers another's pleasure to his own. That shows, and at the same time develops, the kindness of his heart. The problems which we are now considering, and whose right settlement mainly depends on the warmth and fidelity of Christian principle, are thrust upon us partly because they make an atmosphere in which love will have the best opportunity to grow.

It is often objected, however, that the requirements of such a charity may become unreasonable and oppressive—that there are narrow-minded and captious persons who, upon any pretext, will seek to obstruct our freedom and spoil our innocent pleasures. Where, then, shall the line be drawn? When shall we conclude that our personal enjoyment is of less value to the world and of less esteem in the sight of God than the gratification of this or the other stranger, who may be an idiot and a bigot too?

The only answer must be that a line cannot be definitely drawn. We are left to the impulses of our natural or gracious hearts. They will put their own constructions upon every principle laid down for guidance. The problem is not, "Who is technically right?" nor, "Who has the better head and the more enlightened con-

science?" nor, "Who is more prominent in the world's work?" This is not a matter of pride, but of self-forgetting charity. The stress and point lie in the question, "What will save this brother whom my liberty might offend?" The more unreasonable the prejudice, likewise, to which we yield, the weaker the opinion to which we make our offering of peace and good-will, the more tenderly will God be sure to regard it. Nor in such an offering shall we be losing anything half as precious as are those graces of meekness and patience and love which, in following the apostle's example, we shall preserve and promote.

Certainly, a Christian conscience should not be a weak conscience. We must not be binding upon others unnecessary burdens. We must not lay our whims and guesses and prejudices, a reformer's fury or a child's ignorance, upon all our neighbors and friends. Making scarecrows need not be our only or our chief occupation. Better is it to climb where Paul stood than to stay with those easily-troubled Corinthians. Let us go on unto perfection. We may be thankful if instead of being among those who ask for concessions, we have reached the high place of those who are delighted to grant them.

(4.) The superiority of "love as a law" is manifest, therefore. Such a force is not only disciplinary, but it is in the highest degree disciplinary; it secures the best advantage and growth. "This law is not arbitrary. It is no law of fanaticism or enthusiasm or self-torture." In preferring it we only surrender a lower, because we seek a manifestly higher, good. "To work from fear is slavery; to work under the compulsion of animal want is a hardship, and if not a positive yet a relative curse; to work for personal ends, as for pride or ambition or the

accumulation of property, either for its own sake or our own sake, is compatible with freedom, but has in it nothing either purifying or ennobling; it finds and leaves the soul dry and hard. But activity from love is the perfection of freedom and of joy."* We are never so high and great as when for love we can easily make sacrifices to advance the unity and power of Christ's Church or the welfare of those for whom he died. He was greatest on the cross; we are greatest when we may be there with him.

(5.) How various are the problems of our modern life which this lesson touches we may readily discover.

Shall I drink wine? What shall be my attitude toward the theatre and the opera? How shall I deal with the question as to promiscuous dancing? Shall I on Sunday patronize the street-railway? What games shall I approve? How far may I indulge a taste for personal adornment, particularly in places of public worship? What principles and limitations of expenditure are to be preferred in building, beautifying and administering a home? These and a thousand like inquiries are to be treated in the spirit with which Paul approached the Corinthian problem about meat. They are not merely ethical, but Christian, problems. They must be submitted to conscience, and an enlightened conscience; yet no decision at that tribunal can be deemed conclusive unless sanctioned also by charity. Will my "meat make my brother to offend"? High indeed is the dignity of the obscurest disciple of Christ who, whenever that question is raised, can quickly and happily make Paul's reply. Nor is that dignity at all beyond our reach if we are willing to seek for "grace to help."

* Dr. Mark Hopkins's baccalaureate discourse on *Perfect Love*.

CHRISTIAN LOVE.

BY THE REV. HENRY A. NELSON, D.D.

May 4.—1 Cor. 13:1-13; Rom. 13:10.

THE revisers of our English version of the New Testament are right in giving us the word *love* all through the lesson for this day instead of *charity*, as we used to read it from the version of King James's revisers. It is the same word, in Paul's Greek, which he wrote in the Golden Text: "*Love* worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore *love* is the fulfilling of the law." It is the same word which the apostle John wrote in that wonderful sentence, "*God is love*" (1 John 4:16), and in the many places in which we read the word "*love*" in the same Epistle. It is the corresponding verb which John wrote in all such sentences as, "Beloved, let us *love* one another;" "He that *loveth* not knoweth not God;" "We *love* him because he first *loved* us." If you will make a copy of the third and fourth chapters of the First Epistle of John upon a sheet of paper with ordinary ink, and then with red ink or pencil draw a line under every "*love*" and "*loveth*" and "*loved*," you will be surprised to see how many such marks you will get upon the sheet. Every one of those marks will be under the translation of the same Greek noun which is rendered *charity* in our old version of 1 Cor. 13, and *love* in the Revised Version. It is also the same verb which our Lord used in his summary of the Decalogue (Matt. 22:37, 39):

I. "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

II. "Thou shalt *love* thy neighbor as thyself."

One of the first men I talked with about the Revised Version just after it appeared expressed his regret that this change was made in 1 Cor. 13. He is an eminent and learned minister. He knew and acknowledged that the word (*agapé*) means *love*, and is rightly so rendered in most other places in the New Testament, yet he had so long been familiar with "*charity*" as the key-word of that anthem-like chapter that his ear missed the pleasing cadence of it. It may be so with us all; it may take us a long time to get used to the change. Yet none of us would be willing to read in the Golden Text, "Charity worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore charity is the fulfilling of the law." But if *love* is the right word there, it would be difficult to say why it is not so throughout the lesson. If we are using the old familiar version, and read "*charity*" all through the chapter, we ought to put into the word all the deep, wide, rich meaning of "*love*."

The Golden Text is fitly chosen; it is suitable to the lesson. Let us meditate upon it:

I. "*Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore—*

II. "*Love is the fulfilling of the law.*"

I. In the preceding verse Paul has given several specimens of the commandments which make up the Decalogue. They are all prohibitions; they all say, "*Thou shalt not.*" They forbid what would harm some fellow-creature in regard to his property, his person, his character or his home, and forbid all desires which would tend to any such wronging of others. After giving these specimens the apostle declares that all the other precepts of the Decalogue are of the same character. They are all

such as every man will spontaneously obey who is unselfish, who has the same careful regard for his fellow-man as for himself.

The apostle limits his illustration to what is commonly called the "Second Table" of the law, the commandments which relate to our duties to one another. He says that they are all "briefly comprehended in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The scriptural use of the word "neighbor" makes it applicable to every one of our fellow-creatures to whom we have any opportunity to do good or to do harm. Nothing can be plainer or more certain than that we never wish to do harm to any one whom we truly love. Certainly, then, no one of the things forbidden in the commandments of the second table would ever be done in this world if every person did "love his neighbor as himself."

I have spoken of the commandments of the second table as relating to our duties *to one another*. Careful readers will see that this does not describe the fifth commandment so accurately as it does all the five that follow it. The fifth commandment ("the first commandment with promise," Eph. 6:2) is indeed the first of the six commandments which "contain our duty to man" (*Larger Catechism*, Q. 98), but it does not exactly describe a duty which we owe to *one another*. Every duty which is contained in either of the five commandments following the fifth is due both ways. Each man owes it to his neighbor, and may justly claim that his neighbor owes the same to him. But it is not so with the fifth commandment. This contains a duty that is due only one way. It is a duty which children owe to parents, and which parents do not owe to children. There is indeed something expressed by the word "*honor*" which parents do owe to their children. Even in a new-born babe its parent sees

the likeness of God, and reverences it—takes it into his arms with solemn awe, handles it not only as a precious thing, but as a sacred thing. There is an honor due from the parent to the child. But the Scriptures make it evident that the fifth commandment means a kind of honor which is due from children to parents which is not due from parents to children. It is expressed (Eph. vi. 1) by the word obey. This difference between the fifth commandment and those following it has led some to think that we should reckon it in the first table, thus having five commandments in each of the two tables—the first containing our duties to those above us (God and our parents), and which are obligatory only in one direction, and the second containing the duties which we owe to one another, which are due both ways. The adjustment of the two tables of the law is not prescribed in Scripture, and is not important except in so far as it helps us to study out the true meaning and spirit of each commandment, and to impress it upon our minds—to “hide it in our hearts, that we may not sin against God” (Ps. 119:11.)

But it is important to notice that there is one of the commandments “containing our duty to man” which does not forbid something wrong, but commands something right. It does not begin with “*thou shalt not,*” but it is positive in its form and contains something which we ought to do all the time: “Honor thy father and thy mother.” No doubt the principle of this commandment applies to teachers, guardians and rulers, all who have rightful authority over us, as well as to the parents to whom God gives us in our birth. No one can help seeing that love to our parents, and love alone, can really fulfill the fifth commandment.

II. “LOVE is the fulfilling of the LAW.” “*Fulfilling*”

is a great word. It has a very deep as well as a very wide meaning. It is a good word for Bible-readers to search out and study in all the places in which it occurs, especially where things of the Old Testament are said to be *fulfilled* in the New Testament, and where our Lord speaks of all the law being *fulfilled*, without "one jot or tittle" passing away from it. In this Golden Text I think that "*the fulfilling* of the law" in "love" is a great thing. We have already seen that no person can wish to harm any one whom he sincerely loves. But is that all that we can say about it? Does that *fulfill* the law? Does that fill the word "love" full of its true meaning? When we have said that a man who truly loves his neighbor will not kill him, nor rob him, nor cheat him, nor lie about him, nor envy him, is that all that is to be said? Certainly, we all know that we are not satisfied with merely doing no harm to those whom we love: we wish to do them good. What should you think of a mother of whom the best that could be said was, that there was no danger of her killing her babe or cruelly bruising it or giving it what she knew would injure it? What kind of brother would he be of whom the best that you could say would be, that he never does anything to hurt his sister? Even a neighbor of whom no more can be said than that he does not steal your goods nor trespass upon your premises might as well not be your neighbor at all. The priest and the Levite who looked on the man that fell among thieves and passed by on the other side did nothing to hurt him. Were they true neighbors to him? Nay, the good Samaritan, who "went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him," was his true neighbor. When we speak thus of a *true* neighbor, we mean that he fulfills the duty of a

neighbor; he fills the word *neighbor* full of its true meaning. The priest and the Levite owed the same neighborly duty which the good Samaritan fulfilled. And how can the difference between his behavior and theirs be explained or accounted for? When we say that the Samaritan had a true neighborly love to the sufferer, and that the Levite and priest had no such love, have we not given a full account of it, and the only account of it that can be given?

From such examples and illustrations we best learn what is the real nature of the love which fulfills the law of God.

There are many words which properly express some high and noble, perhaps holy, idea, which in actual human usage come to mean something less noble or less worthy. So it is with the word *love*. It certainly is not always used in its highest and noblest sense. This might be true without its being ever used in any positively unworthy or base sense. There is no objection to applying this word to the fondness of the hen for the chickens which she gathers under her wings, or of the doe for the fawn that frisks by her side, as well as to that of the human mother for the babe that sleeps on her breast or gladdens her with the music of its laughter. It is no degradation of the word *love* to apply it to all natural fondness of sensitive creatures of every grade for mates or offspring, to all attachment of the lower creatures to their own kind, which causes their kind or gentle or helpful treatment of one another. But the instinctive fondness for one another of which birds and beasts are capable cannot be the love of which the law of God speaks, and which is the fulfillment of all his commandments. This must have in it a moral element of which irrational creatures are incapable. Yet there is enough

of similarity between the actions in the one case and in the other to justify the use of the same term in both.

No doubt our human nature contains all the elements of the animal nature, superadding to these the higher elements which make us subjects of moral government. Instinctive sympathy with our own kind and instinctive fondness for our own kin are common to us and the creatures beneath us. It is innocent in us as it is in them; it may be as destitute of moral worth or worthiness in us as it is in them. In us it may become sinful by being either indulged or violated contrary to God's law, which we are capable of knowing. In us it can rise to the dignity of virtue only by being recognized as a subject for regulation by God's commandment, and being obediently so regulated. In us also love to our fellow-creatures, whether those near to us in the domestic relations or only holding the common relation to us which the Bible expresses by the term "neighbor," has respect to the higher well-being of which rational and accountable creatures are capable, and of which the animals below us are not capable. This higher, rational love is thoughtful and forethoughtful. It is not mere instinct nor mere sentiment. It is not wholly engrossed with present gratification. It considers not merely what is most pleasing, but what is best—not merely for now, but for all the future. The love to my neighbor which God requires of me is not the mere disposition to please or gratify my neighbor, but the disposition to benefit him. "Let every one of us please his neighbor, *for his good*, to edification" (Rom. 15 : 2.) That strong, solid word ("edification") implies essential and permanent benefit in the improvement of character. It implies making him a better man, and more of a man, than he was before. It is building him up, enlarging his being and his worthi-

ness. The love which fulfills the law desires for every fellow-being that he may become the most and the best that he is capable of becoming.

From the apostle's limiting his illustration to the second table of the law we must not infer that he ignored or undervalued the first table. The Bible everywhere assumes that the love of God and the love of men are as naturally and closely related as is the mutual love of a married pair with their common love of their offspring. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). John and Paul had as little respect for any professed love to God which did not evidence itself in love to men made in the image of God, as their brother-apostle James had for any professed faith which did not evidence itself in good works. On the other hand, it cannot be supposed that an apostle who makes such an estimate of love as is expressed in our text intended to teach the possibility of a love to men fulfilling the law of God without love to God. He rightly assumed that his readers would know that the part of God's law which he cited is what the Lord Jesus had declared to be the second commandment, at the same time declaring it to be "like unto" "the first and great commandment," "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:38-40). "Like unto it" indeed it is. The principle is the same in both. Love is the soul of each—love to every being proportioned to the worth of that being; unlimited, supreme love to Him who is of unlimited worthiness, of supreme excellence; impartial love to all our fellow-human beings; subordinate, proportionate love (do we not rightly infer?) to all creatures beneath us. Subor-

dinate and subservient to us God has clearly made known his will that they should be; but doubtless his law of love forbids all cruelty to them, all wanton waste of their lives, all heedless or purposed subjection of them to unnecessary suffering, all robbing them of opportunity to become and to enjoy the most and the best of which they are capable. There is no creature that man can reach or affect which has not rights that man ought to respect—none for the welfare of which, according to its nature and capacity, man ought not to have a benevolent care.

“He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God, who loveth us,
Hath made and loveth all.”

VICTORY OVER DEATH.

BY THE REV. HERVEY D. GANSE.

May 11.—1 Cor. 15:50-58.

WE have come to one of the grandest and most precious utterances which the Holy Ghost has made in human speech. Our wisdom will lie in following this sublime prediction with a teachable mind and step by step. Of course the responses which it awakens in pious faith and feeling can only be hinted at in this brief discourse.

The whole passage naturally divides itself into four successive parts. The first five verses carry forward to a logical conclusion the main argument of the chapter in proof and illustration of the fact of the future resurrection (vs. 50-54). The following verse (55) breaks out into exultation over the result thus assured. The next two verses (56, 57) turn exultation into gratitude by acknowledging how the triumphant issue is due only to God through Christ. A practical lesson of unwavering faith and duty in the 58th verse fitly crowns the whole.

I. The advance in the argument is of great interest. Earlier in the chapter it is shown that the doctrine of the resurrection of the body belongs to the essence of the Christian scheme, which, on the one hand, rests on the fact of Christ's resurrection, and on the other assures,

through him, the resurrection of his people. After this begins at verse 35 that series of beautiful illustrations which has taught all Christians how the body that dies and the body that is raised may be very different, and yet be the same; so that at the stage of its "sowing" it may be marked with corruption, dishonor, weakness, mere naturalness and earthiness; and at the stage of its "raising," with incorruption, glory and power, with spiritual adaptations and the image of the "Lord from heaven."

Upon that statement, which reaches down to the beginning of our lesson, the 50th verse makes this great advance: it declares how a change as great as has been described *must* take place to fit the believer for his abode in the "kingdom of God." Observe, St. Paul assumes through all this chapter that the spirits of the redeemed in their eternal condition must be clothed with bodies of some sort. This does not touch the question of the condition of the pious dead in the interval between their death and the resurrection—a matter entirely passed over by him here, as in the cognate passage (2 Cor. 5). It is in view of things ultimate and succeeding Christ's coming that he declares, with the instinctive sympathy of all believers, that he desires "not to be unclothed" and not to "be found naked." He is maintaining this same fundamental assumption of a body for the redeemed spirit when he announces in the 50th verse that he has "this" decisive thing to "say:" that "flesh and blood"—our present body, viewed not here as the symbol of sin, but in its very best condition as a body of earthly material for earthly uses—"cannot inherit the kingdom of God." The verse goes on to give one part of the reason for that impossibility: "corruption doth not inherit incorruption." An heir must have some adaptation to his inheritance.

Flesh and blood decay; how, then, could they be the heirs of that which never decays? But, more than that, flesh and blood could not even take possession of the heavenly inheritance, if only for a moment. The senses and powers which are excellent for this world are not fit for that. Just as here touch cannot do the work of sight, even the sight and hearing of flesh and blood are too coarse to take in heavenly objects. And yet a direct suggestion seems to be made that the new powers will resemble and exalt those which belong to us now; for it is said (v. 53), “This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” *This*—the body that we all know of—is to put on, like a sumptuous garment, incorruption and immortality. Compare the “clothed upon” of 2 Cor. 5 : 4, where the present body is regarded as one vestment of the soul, upon which comes, as though it were another vestment, the incorruption which “swallows up mortality in life.” These expressions all indicate an incalculable change passing upon our bodies as we know them, but not an *exchange* of the powers to which we are used for something utterly new and unaccustomed.

And as such a statement provides for our recognition of ourselves, it provides as fairly for our recognition of each other; for in every case it shall be “this mortal” that shall have put on immortality; so that in every case experience of change shall instruct him who feels it what change he is to look for in others. All this is indicated rather than said, but indicated so amply that our hopes fasten upon it with perfect security, while we wait for the dazzling reality to define itself when we shall come to it.

It is in further illustration of this absolute necessity of change in the body which is to be at home in heaven that

the apostle expounds (in vs. 51, 52) what he calls a "mystery." We must not mistake the New-Testament meaning of that word. It describes something that has been unknown, because unrevealed. Having been revealed, the matter of it may still be "mysterious" in our common sense of that word; as is, for example, the "mystery of godliness" (1 Tim. 3:16); or it may be perfectly intelligible, like that "mystery" of God's purpose to save the Gentiles described in Eph. 3:3, 4, 9. Of the latter class of mysteries, quite intelligible when explained, is that here "shown;" which, in effect, is this: that when the last trump shall announce the coming of the Lord (see 1 Thess. 4:16) some saints shall be alive. These shall not have need to "sleep"—that is, to die—for they shall at once be "caught up together with" the immense company of the "dead in Christ," then risen to "meet the Lord in the air." Yet these living saints shall by no means be "caught up" in that condition of "flesh and blood" in which the sound of the trump shall find them. They are to be "changed," without dying, into the very condition of "incorruption and immortality" into which the bodies of the "dead in Christ" are changed in rising.

This explanation is of great interest, not only in itself, but in view of the personal feeling which Paul avowed in making it. For he most noticeably grouped both himself and the Corinthians, to whom he was writing, with those who might expect to be "changed" without "sleeping." "*The dead shall be raised,*" "*we shall be changed.*" He did the same, and even more explicitly, in that passage to the Thessalonians just now cited: "*The Lord himself shall descend, . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive,*" etc., "*shall be caught up,*" etc.

Concerning these remarkable forms of expression it is

important to note two things, which, fairly considered, clear up whatever difficulty is in them :

(a.) Such expressions of hope could not have been put forth as inspired prediction or even as confident expectation. No devout and intelligent Christian, even though an apostle, could have thought himself appointed to foretell or to count upon the date of a "day and an hour" concerning which his Master, Christ, had declared with repeated emphasis that there was absolutely no knowledge on earth, even with himself, nor among the angels, but only in the bosom of the Father. The most, therefore, that any apostle could be thought to do in regard to that hidden date was to speak out frankly his own personal Christian hope and longing.

(b.) Still, the existence of such a longing in the soul of Paul makes plain at least so much as this : that the most fervent and enlightened piety turns instinctively, and from the earliest Christian age, to "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2 : 13). This is not here said in the interest of any systematic interpretation of the many passages that bear upon the disputed question of the second advent, but only in recognition of the unquestionable spirit of these present words of Paul. Very certainly, the coming of our ascended Lord "a second time without sin unto salvation" ought to be to all Christians, as it was to the apostles, a matter of enthusiastic desire and expectation ; and no disagreements among Christian interpreters concerning the order in which that event is to stand with other predicted facts ought to blind us to that early and fervent desire. It is natural, indeed, that, with so many generations passed without the fulfillment of that hope, expectancy of it should become less eager. But it remains true that "of that day and hour

knoweth no man ;" so that those particular men who "shall be alive and remain" at the time of its coming may be as little expectant of it as are we to-day. There can be no question that the spirit that lovingly "watches" is nearest to the Lord's command and to the best example.

The sign of that coming shall be the "last trump"—a supernatural sound, audible and intelligible to all the earth—at which signal, with instant and complete effect, "the dead shall be raised incorruptible" and the living saints "shall be changed." No imagination can picture that scene. "He shall appear, and we shall be like him." He shall come upon the millions of the saints, both dead and living, as the sun breaks out upon the sea: that instant every ripple gleams. At the instant of his appearing Christ is "glorified in his saints."

And that shall be (v. 54) the bringing to pass of "the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." This saying is quoted in substance rather than in form from Isa. 25 : 8, where it stands, "He (Jehovah) has swallowed up death for ever." How the same Hebrew expression came to be rendered "for ever" and "in victory" needs not here be told: the meanings are not far apart. It would seem that in the form here quoted this glorious promise of Messianic blessing had been current in the Jewish Church. A similar saying is quoted from the ancient rabbis. But down to the time of this exposition by St. Paul it had been a "saying" dimly understood; and down to that sounding of the last trump it was to be, however understood, a "saying" only; for till then death was to work right on. But at that sound Christ comes in "the glory of his power," and turns the "saying that is written" into the fact that is seen, and "Death is swallowed up in victory." What shall Death ever have done against those risen saints that shall not in that moment be

made up to them? The wasting frame that watched in mortal weakness for his stroke stands forth in the likeness of Christ with glory and immortality. The mind that fluttered and wandered as the pulses grew faint knows even as it is known. The friends that were parted are met again; the worship that died on palsied lips bursts forth, like the sound of many waters, in the new song that shall never cease; and the Saviour who, unseen, made dying easy by the promise of his appearing, is come and is seen, and shall never be unseen again.

“O day for which creation
And all its tribes were made!
O joy, for all its former woes
A thousandfold repaid!
Oh then what raptured greetings
On Canaan’s happy shore!
What knitting severed friendships up
Where partings are no more!”

Thenceforth “the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. 7:17).

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

II. The apostle, beholding by faith that future victory, makes it a present one; for he challenges Death in advance (v. 55): “O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave,* where is thy victory?” Even now the victory on Death’s side is only seeming. The believing soul, and even the waiting flesh, can well submit to it. There may be pain in it, but there is no terror. In place of that, secure and infinite hope. So that this shout of

* The Revised Version, following the best text, substitutes “death” a second time for “grave;” the meaning, of course, undergoes no change.

victory over Death belongs to every Christian deathbed, and therefore to every moment of Christian living. This world of graves is crowded with fainting and bewildered travelers. It is only Christ's army that from generation to generation, "looking for and hasting to the coming of the day of God," marches to the song, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"

III. The solid Christian ground of that triumph, whether present or future, now appears in words equally full of enthusiastic gratitude and of gospel truth, and which, therefore, signally show how Christian doctrine, so often foolishly disparaged, is radiant with Christian feeling. Take that 56th verse by itself, and what could sound less like an outburst of pious delight than those didactic lessons, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law"? But add on the verse that follows, and set the doctrine of the grace of God in "our Lord Jesus Christ" over against those fearful facts of law, sin and death, and doctrine turns into the intensest triumph and gratitude.

The doctrine is this: that the power of death to "sting" either the living or the dead lies in the fact and guilt of sin; that sin is possible only under the law of God, which law, taking its character out of the character of God, must be holy and just and eternal, and therefore terrible; but that the terrors of law and sin and death are all met and abolished in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, who "is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10: 4), and who for them all "died unto sin once," in order that they, with him, may eternally "live unto God." This perfect work, attested in the resurrection of "Christ the first-fruits," waits to be completed in "those who are Christ's at his coming." In view

of these gospel facts, which counterbalance the natural facts of sin and death, and of that love of the Father which appointed them, let every believing soul exclaim now and for ever, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

If we now compare the enthusiastic interest which these words of the apostle evince in the present triumph of faith over death, we can estimate the more fairly the measure of real expectation covered by his expressions, noticed above, concerning his possible "change" without "sleeping." That, evidently, was only a longing to which he did not commit himself. With his substantial faith even here, as later in his life, he looks Death in the face, is ready to grapple with him, and unites himself with all the pious dead in blessing God, who "giveth *us* the victory."

IV. In the last verse of the chapter and of the lesson this great doctrine of the resurrection bears fruit, as every gospel doctrine does. And one of its fruits is hinted at, rather than described, when the apostle begins his exhortation, "*Therefore, my beloved brethren.*" Men who expect to live together in human love, in Christ's presence and image and to all eternity, ought to be "beloved brethren" here on earth.

But two chief results of the doctrine are carefully named and enjoined.

The first is a result of established faith and hope: "Be ye stedfast, immovable." The two words differ by the greater strength of the latter, which plainly pointed to that skeptical attempt, to which the whole chapter was a reply, to "move" Christians from their faith in this great truth. That attempt is not yet given over in the world, and we as much as any need to attend to the

apostle when he exhorts, in effect, "You will hear this promised work of Christ challenged. But now that I have shown it to you in its blessed fullness and certainty, fill your souls with the thought of it, and let the glorious hope and the promise of Christ leave no room for question."

The second is a result of holy living—the ultimate result of all divine truth in human hearts, whether in this life or the life to come: "Always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." As though he had said, "See what a work the Lord has done for you, and what a work he is yet to do; what a right thing it is to serve him! what a safe thing it is to serve him! How can spiritual labor ever be wasted, whether you spend it on your own soul or the souls of others, when the end of it is such an immortality, and that end already ensured 'in the Lord'?"

What inspiration is here for all pastors and parents, and no less for Sabbath-school teachers! Death gets his seeming victories often over the young, and certainly over the old. Let us always remember that "this mortal"—the faces we are meeting so often, the ears into which we are speaking, and our eyes that look upon them and our tongues that speak to them—may, by the grace of Christ, "put on immortality" together in that great day.

Finally, this hope is entitled to "swallow up," not only death, but life. It is the great sea to which all our rivers run, and which sends back its own tides into them all; so that the true difference between life here and life hereafter is, that "to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

THE UPROAR AT EPHESUS.

BY THE REV. CHARLES CUTHBERT HALL.

May 18.—Acts 19:23-41-20:1, 2.

IN the history of primitive Christianity there is no more soul-stirring record than that of the Ephesian church. Amid obstacles and antagonisms of the most mountainous and relentless character a Christian congregation was established beneath the very shadows of heathenism. To understand the demonstration of God's power toward the Ephesian church, and especially to discern the significance of the "uproar at Ephesus," we must first speak of that idolatrous faith which had here antedated Christianity by many centuries.

At the mention of Ephesus the mind of the classical student is peopled with the shadowy images of mingled myth and history. Around the foundations of Ephesian life ever lay the cloud of fable in which moved the grotesque forms of Amazons. Eleven centuries before our Lord came to the earth Ephesus was pledged to the Asiatic faith, and introduced as her tutelar deity the Astarte of the Asians, identified with the Artemis of the Greeks and the Diana of the Latins. Five hundred years before the Incarnation there arose in Ephesus a temple of Artemis or Diana so startling in its proportions, so incalculable in its wealth, that it ranked as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. "The edifice," says one elo-

quent historian (Milner, on *The Seven Churches of Asia*, pp. 100, 101), "was the finest specimen of the Ionian style. The length of the temple was four hundred and twenty-five feet and the breadth two hundred and twenty, with one hundred and twenty-seven columns of Parian marble, each of a single shaft and sixty feet high, the gift of kings. The folding-doors were made of cypress-wood highly polished, which had been treasured up for four generations. The ceiling was of cedar. The most perfect works of the great masters in sculpture and painting were deposited in it: one of the works of Apelles which it contained was worth upward of twenty talents of gold, or one hundred and ninety thousand dollars. Praxiteles adorned the shrine of the goddess, placing golden bars under her hands. Parrhasius and Apelles employed their skill to embellish the panels of the walls."

Two hundred years later this temple was partially destroyed by fire, but the inexhaustible wealth and zeal of the Ephesian worshipers immediately restored it to more than its original grandeur. At the time when Christianity entered the world the pagan glories of this great city were at their height. Not only were the courts of the temple thronged with willing votaries, but vast traffic was carried on by silversmiths, who manufactured miniatures of the shrine, to be borne about and adored in private by the faithful.

And what, let us ask, was the nature of this worship? For it is necessary that we understand this before we can realize the miracle of the introduction of Christianity there. Strange and fearful was the iniquity of that faith, appealing to and fostering the worst passions of mankind. The statue of Diana at Ephesus "was not," says Dean Milman (*History of Christianity*, ii. 51), "that of the divine huntress, like that twin-sister of the Belvedere Apollo in

the gallery of Paris: she was the ‘Diana multimamma,’ the emblematic impersonation of all-productive, all-nutritious Nature, retaining in her image the old symbolic form of the Eastern Nature-worship.” She was, as I have said, the dark and horrible importation of Asian belief—Astarte, whose very name was the sound of corruption and degeneracy. Her worship was the completeness of animalism, fearful and unmentionable in its wickedness, to the degradation of which St. Paul alludes in his Epistle to the Ephesians, when he says, “It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret” (Eph. 5 : 12). He rightly calls them “the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5 : 11).

To this city, bowing at the shrine of darkness with abject and fanatical debasement, came the Light of the world, the glory of Christ, in the person of his servant Paul, who was the real founder of the Ephesian church, though, as Howson says, “possibly the first seeds of Christian truth were sown at Ephesus immediately after the great Pentecost.” And one has forcibly expressed that feeling which arises so instinctively to our minds of the odds against which Christianity must fight: “We can scarcely conceive of any expedition so apparently hopeless as that in which he was embarked, or any scheme so chimerical as the one he was prosecuting. A Cilician missionary, almost solitary, bearing no edicts to sanction, no civil power to overawe, and no earthly advantages to invite, wafted in a small Corinthian vessel to the Asian shore, to subvert a religion that was national, popular and long-established, for the embellishment of which the genius of antiquity had been taxed, and which it was equally the interest of the artisan, the policy of the priest and the duty of the magistrate to preserve” (*Milner*, p. 111).

But this advent of Christianity at Ephesus is only one more of those thrilling, soul-kindling testimonies to the inherent victory which abides in the gospel we profess, and which makes it rise above the fear of man and the venomous hate of sin, "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

The first visit of Paul is very brief. It is recorded in the chapter preceding the one with which we are specially engaged. There is no evidence that he found any converts at Ephesus at this time, much less an organized congregation. He left Aquila and Priscilla here, after having evidently made, by his earnest addresses, a profound impression on the minds of the Jews of the synagogue. The second visit is more than two years in length, and includes the remarkable ministry in the "school of Tyrannus." Then it was he did his great work, found out where he stood, just what material he had to work with, what he could rely upon as the ground-work for a strong church. And then, too, he kindled in opposing breasts those sparks of jealousy and hatred which ultimately broke out in the "uproar at Ephesus." He had motley elements to deal with, and we will understand them better after carefully pondering the first twenty verses of the nineteenth chapter. He had to meet the uncompromising hostility of the Jewish zealots, who exhibited the most marked intolerance regarding Christian doctrines, and of whom De Pressensé very skillfully remarks (*Early Years of Christianity*, i. pp. 169, 170): "Though Paul preached three months in the Jewish synagogue, here, as at Corinth, he came to an open rupture with his countrymen, and abandoned the struggle with the invincible obduracy of the Pharisaic spirit. He continued to teach the gospel in the house of one Tyrannus, a public teacher of rhetoric.

Thus Christianity gained a readier victory in a school of pagan literature than in the school of the doctors of the law, and those who read Moses and the prophets showed themselves less prepared to receive the gospel than the Greeks nurtured on Homer and Pindar. So true is it that external revelation is a dead letter to those whose hearts are hardened."

But besides these Jewish opposers he met the Jewish proselytes, who were so strangely ignorant as to say, when he asked them if they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." He must begin and teach these nominal Christians over again from the very rudiments, as if they were children. Then, besides these, he collided with those strolling or vagabond Jews who were exorcists, bewitching the people with charms and incantations. His victory over them was so transcendent that the church really took its first impulse from the hour when so many of the citizens brought their heathenish manuscripts of the occult sciences and burned them in the public square at a vast loss of money.

These various contests and these evident victories were gradually exciting suspicion and alarm in the secret circles of pagan worship: they were cumulative impulses leading on to the climax and the uproar sure to come. By and by the priests of Diana began to take fright lest they should lose their hold on the public veneration, and the silversmiths began to stir up a trade-guild agitation lest this new faith should cut in upon their rich profits.

At last the long-gathering storm broke. Like the north wind in the night at sea, there came up that frightful roar of the mob, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" as it were the echo of that hellish shrieking that long before burst from the throats of Baal-priests on

Carmel as the intrepid Elijah goaded them with sneers sharp as the lancets with which they gashed themselves. Read the account of the Ephesian uproar in our lesson, and it will help you to understand those words of Paul: "I have fought with beasts at Ephesus" (1 Cor. 15 : 32). "This lively image," says De Pressensé, "is an admirable representation of the scene in question. A roaring lion is the truest symbol of that enraged mob as it came bellowing into the circus. It was the first deep roar of paganism against Christianity. The vociferations in the circus at Ephesus would be re-echoed again and again during the first three centuries in the clamorous cry, '*The Christians to the lions'!*'" "It was the first recorded collision between Orientalism and Christianity" (Milman, ii. 57). But the Church of Christ at Ephesus lived and solidified and developed through it all, made perfect through sufferings.

St. Paul appointed Timothy to be the "angel" or presiding minister of the congregation thus finally established amid innumerable difficulties, and when Paul had passed off the scene by the suffering of martyrdom at Rome, the aged John took up his residence at Ephesus, making it the centre from which, as a sort of metropolitan of Asia, he exercised a general apostolic oversight throughout the "seven churches" addressed in the Apocalypse and the others then existing in the proconsular province.

We have now sketched briefly the Ephesian paganism, the Christian introduction, the inevitable collision, and the ultimate survival of a believing congregation in that hotbed of idolatry. We have thus spoken more of the circumstances causing and surrounding the "uproar" than upon the events in detail of that stormy and fateful day. We have taken for granted that the eye of the

reader has been constantly turning toward the appointed Bible-lesson, and that each incident contained therein is clearly in mind. We are then prepared to close this paper by suggesting some conclusions which naturally remain in the mind of one thoughtfully perusing the remarkable narrative of Acts 19.

I. Some of the individuals appearing prominently in this narrative suggest to our minds practical considerations. Let us refer to three conspicuous figures.

(a.) Demetrius the silversmith represents an element of human thought that has ever opposed the spirit of Christ's gospel—namely, *self-interest hiding itself under the cloak of a religious zeal*. The speech of Demetrius in the trades-union meeting is an interesting combination of loyalty for the goddess and love for the gold; and in his effort to stir up his fellow-craftsmen he not only appeals to their religious zeal by intimating that the centre of their worship was threatened, but takes care to touch the financial question by frankly hinting, "Ye know that by this craft we have our wealth." It is the old, old test which Christ himself proposed: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Human nature will not specially oppose the gospel of Christ till that gospel makes some claim that antagonizes self-interest, which involves a reduction of the "no small gain." Then, under all kinds of pious disguises, the selfish heart of man fights for its full gain, and, till divine grace subdues, will do anything rather than take up the cross of personal deprivation for the glory of Jesus. "The words of Demetrius," says Dean Plumptre (*Elliott's Commentary, in loco*), "bring before us, with an almost naïve simplicity, the element of vested interests which has at all times played so prominent a part in its

resistance to religious and political reforms, and entered largely into the persecutions against which the early preachers of the gospel had to contend. Every city had its temples; sacrifices and feasts created a market for industry. In its later development the Christian Church, employing the services of art, gave rise to new vested interests, which in their turn were obstacles to the work of reformation. At first, however, the absence of the æsthetic element in the aims and life of the Church seemed to threaten those who were occupied in such arts with an entire loss of livelihood, and roused them to a fierce antagonism."

(b.) The town-clerk, or recorder, of the city of Ephesus, who by his remarkably skillful speech finally appeased the tumult, illustrates that beneficent law whereby the almighty Ruler of human affairs constantly employs for the furtherance of his work unconscious as well as conscious instruments. In this instance the safety of the Ephesian Christian congregation, the safety of Gaius and Aristarchus, the safety of St. Paul himself, is secured through the interposition of one who had no interest in Christianity—who, on the testimony of his own words, is an ardent disciple of the heathen faith. It is his advice which calms the angry mob and disperses the ferocious assembly. So God makes the wrath of man to praise him. Surely this thought is one of great comfort to Christians. God can guard the interests of his Church not only by raising up defenders of the faith, but by overruling the actions of those who care for none of these things, "so that unconsciously they shall work for the prosperity and the safety of the holy cause."

(c.) The great apostle appears in this Ephesian tumult as a bright illustration of two thoughts: 1st. The instinctive self-forgetfulness of a consecrated spirit. When the

people rushed into the theatre, bearing as on a torrent the helpless forms of Gaius and Aristarchus, the instantaneous thought of Paul is not for himself, but for the Macedonian brothers, to "help them," and for the congregation, to save it. The Spirit of Jesus is upon him: "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake!" 2d. The power of Christian character to command the respect and love of unbelievers. Who were those that detained Paul from exposing himself to certain death in the theatre? Not only the disciples, who felt that in losing him they would lose all, but certain of the "chiefs of Asia which were his friends"—the heathen Asiarchs, of princely wealth and unbridled idolatry, who were presiding over the sumptuous revels then in progress: these are so impressed with the manliness, the noble self-forgetfulness, of Paul, that they are won to him. Those in whose lives shine the glorious manhood of Jesus shall, like him, "draw all men" more and more to the truth.

II. Finally. The "uproar at Ephesus," taken as a whole, is but one link in the chain of results which follow Christ and Christianity. He said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." Christ and Christianity *must* antagonize the world, must oppose the power of darkness, must come in collision with the prince of this world. God and mammon are enemies. By nature the world loves not Christ. Let Christians remember this: "Marvel not if the world hate you: ye know that it hated me before it hated you." But if the Spirit of Jesus is in us, if we are "in Christ," we shall overcome the world, we shall be saved in its uproar, and we shall be able to bring out from the service of the world some souls to seek the blessed Redeemer and to turn "from the power of Satan unto God."

LIBERAL GIVING.

BY THE REV. THOMAS H. ROBINSON, D.D.

May 25.—2 Cor. 9:7.

THE inveterate selfishness of the human heart has been confronted by an inspired discussion of the subject of giving. Well for us that we may appeal to this court of final authority.

The eighth and ninth chapters of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians are occupied with the theme, giving a more complete deliverance upon it than can be found elsewhere in the Scriptures. The duty of giving, the principles which should guide us in giving, the measure of our giving, the motives which should inspire us to give, and certain examples that are models in giving, are presented with admirable tact and force by one who was "not a whit behind the chiefest of the apostles." Paul may elsewhere have doubted whether he spoke by the Spirit: it will not be questioned that here he is the organ of the highest authority.

The discussion is not presented in the cold form of abstract and logical statement; it has the warmth and point of a practical application. Paul has a case in hand. He is "taking up a collection." It was also, in some measure, "a foreign missionary collection." It at once antagonized two forms of selfishness—that which will not give at all, and that which miserably says, "Charity

begins at home." The Christians at Corinth are urged to give to the poor saints in Judea.

In the close of his First Epistle to the Corinthians the apostle had given certain directions concerning this collection, desiring that it should proceed as rapidly as possible, in order to be ready for him on his arrival. He anticipated the pleasure of bearing it himself to Jerusalem. Far away as he was, preaching the gospel in strange lands and the special ambassador to the Gentiles, he still remembered Zion. The glories of his apostleship had not extinguished his love for the Church of his nativity, nor his patriotic fervor for the land of his people: "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved;" "I also am an Israelite;" "I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren's sake."

On his meeting with Titus after the lapse of some time, he learns that for reasons unknown to us the collection was not yet completed. The brethren were not prompt in giving. Perhaps there was not a "willing mind." They needed urgency, argument, motive, and so, out of their tardiness, perhaps out of their selfishness, springs the occasion for an apostolic presentation of the divine laws for Christian benevolence.

We study the subject now in connection solely with this special case of the church at Corinth.

I. The tact and wisdom and tenderness of Paul in presenting and pressing the subject are worthy of unqualified admiration. He was a believer in the most generous sort of giving; he feared not to ask the largest liberality. Having once sent Titus to Corinth to stimulate the brethren in the matter of this contribution, he now sends him again, and makes it the chief object of

his mission. With him he joins two other Christians, whose names are not mentioned, commanding them all to the church. With this formidable body of collectors he sends his Epistle, and in it urges upon them the duty and presents the joy of giving. He does not reproach them for their slowness nor scold them for any apparent penuriousness. He praises, he encourages, he expresses his confidence in them; he inspires them with examples; he points out the blessed reward of giving; he strikes for their hearts; he gives divine laws and appeals to the divine Model.

His stay in Macedonia had impressed him with the great zeal and generosity of the churches in Northern Greece, and he commends their example, who, out of their extreme poverty and their great trials, had abounded in the grace of liberal giving. Their deep poverty, instead of restraining their charity, seemed rather to be a treasure-house out of which it flowed the more cheerfully and abundantly. They contributed "beyond themselves," beyond their power, "having first of all given themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God."

As he holds up the example of the Macedonian Christians, and unfolds the nature and the purpose of this second visit of Titus, the following principles of truth and duty drop from his pen like pearls: namely, that the spirit of true liberality is a grace from God, and should be sought from him as any other spiritual gift; that they who have completely surrendered themselves to the Lord will find it natural and easy to give largely of their substance to his cause or to his poor, and will never be perplexed over the questions of how much they shall give; that Christian character is incomplete in which the grace of liberality is wanting; that it should keep equal step with faith and utterance and knowledge

and earnestness and love and all other Christian graces in the progress of the divine life; that the genuineness of their love to God and man will be most clearly proven as they in their ready sacrifices for the sake of others become imitators of their divine Master, who for their sakes became poor, though he was rich, that they through his poverty might be rich; that true charity is the free and spontaneous offering of a loving heart, and cannot be regulated by any formal laws and amounts of giving. Its only constraint is the constraint of love. Its law is willingness. Its one true measure is giving "according to that a man hath."

The apostle does not say how much a child of God should give, simply because he regards *giving as a spiritual attainment, and not as an outward function.* It is to be governed by spiritual laws and to move by spiritual impulses. He cites the case of the Macedonian Christians, not as a standard of comparison, but as a heart-incentive. He gives no imaginary standard of wealth, nor does he discuss at all the proportion of giving; but, having shown the duty of large and most generous giving; that the spirit of giving is a heavenly grace and an indispensable element in Christian character; that the Christian man should hold himself and all he has subject to the demands of Christ and his cause; and having appealed to the noblest and loftiest examples of giving, both human and divine,—he leaves to the loving and consecrated heart to settle the lesser questions of proportion, confident that the inner law of the spirit will do more than the outward law of the letter in repressing covetousness and stimulating generosity.

And now, in the ninth chapter, after a happy allusion to his own high opinion of the Corinthian Christians and their liberal intentions, and to the pain it would cause

him if they failed to fulfill his boasting to the other churches on their account, he proceeds with his argument, clearly stating for their guidance, and that of the Church in all ages, the following additional facts and principles.

The true giver in blessing others will always be a large receiver of blessings. The word which in the Received Text is translated "bounty" has in the margin its more literal meaning, "blessing." It is a word that is used here, as nowhere else in the New Testament, in the peculiar sense of a gift, and it is clearly so used by the apostle, because he regarded the spirit of giving as a blessing—a blessing to him who through it receives charity, and a blessing to him who possesses it, as calling down upon him the blessing of God. The giver is a sower of seed. His gifts are the seed of a future harvest for which he may confidently look. The harvest will be measured by the sowing: "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." As men shower down blessings they will reap a harvest of blessings. There is here no appeal to selfishness, but the simple statement of a divine law, and one of widest scope. As in agriculture to scatter the seed is the sure and only way to increase it, so in all higher and spiritual things. The man who puts forth little physical strength reaps little vigor of body. The man who feebly uses mental faculty gains little mental power. The man who loves little is little loved and destroys his capacity to love.

As giving is a spiritual grace, it can grow and reward its possessor only by use. It is the divine command for this as for all other powers conferred upon man: "Stir up the gift that is in thee." That man runs athwart a

divine law who niggardly saves his seed, hiding and hoarding it in granaries rather than committing it to the earth that it may "die and bring forth fruit." We are at cross purposes with our own faculties and with God's plans respecting us if the power of giving lies unused within us. Our selfishness dwarfs and impoverishes us. Niggardliness is a most miserable investment. Put any divine gift under the leadership of greed or of sloth, and it is sure to err and come to no good. In the great sum of things giving has a royal place. It has its place supremely in God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, nor less a place in every child of his. As he has stirred up the power that is in him in the unbounded riches both of nature and of grace, and shall reap for ever the harvest of glory and of praise, so must his children do. In this matter of charity the danger does not lie in the direction of excess. It did not lie there with Him who gave his only-begotten Son. It did not lie there with Him who, because there was nothing greater to give, gave himself. And he shall reap bountifully. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive . . . riches."

The Corinthian Christians were very little exposed to the danger of giving too much. Nor are we. He who gave himself is the best and wisest judge of what men ought to do, and of the poor widow who gave her "whole living" he said that her act was noble and right and worthy the praise of all generations. Possibly, it would be no error, but a right noble thing, if many now should give their all.

Paul heaps entreaty upon entreaty that the Corinthian Christians make speed, be ready and be very bountiful in their gifts. The peril he feared was that they would sow sparingly. It is our peril, the standing peril of the Church. We shall hoard our grain or feast ourselves

upon its abundance. We shall selfishly beg off from the high standard to which duty and philanthropy, Christ and our own welfare, are ever summoning us. We shall busy ourselves and delude ourselves in seeking pleas and reasons and apologies for giving but little. But, multiply these as we may, they have no standing in the face of Christian law and fact.

Do we not comprehend how the giver is a receiver? It is sufficient in answer to appeal to two things: first, to the homely evidence of experience; second, to the promises of God.

The cultivator of the soil casts his seed into the ground with faith. He knows not how it will grow, but grow it does. His mind is not racked by stretching into a dark future for some pillar of truth to hold by as he awaits the result of his venturesome faith. He has the experience of all past generations. The yearly harvests of earth for many centuries have been the product of the seed that was sown. The revolving seasons make reply to his faith. And had he the faculty of looking beyond and above the evidence of his senses, he might hear in the early morning of the world's history the mighty promise of the world's Maker: "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."

So also, as we look deeper and study the ways of God in the moral processes of things, we find our faith resting on these two great buttresses—the evidence of human experience and the promise of God.

The testimony of individual experience has lifted the fact into a general law that wise and generous giving will not reduce a man to poverty. Safely may we challenge all selfish and timid givers to point out the men who have been impoverished by their charities, and we

will set over against the beggarly array ten thousand to one of those who have been enriched both in temporal and spiritual things through their charities. Instances beyond number are on record of those who have faithfully and lovingly set apart to the Lord a tenth, a fourth, a third of their annual income, or who out of their poverty have abounded in liberality, and have found that the divine blessing rested upon them. God kept them not only from want; he prospered and enriched them. He increased their power to give, adding to their earthly fortunes.

But this testimony of experience reaches deeper than all rewards in kind. True giving is the act of the soul; it touches character; it is a grand power of moral discipline. It cleanses conscience and purifies the heart to give rightly and generously. It awakens a higher manhood in the soul. It crucifies the low, base lust of selfishness. It strangles closeness and stinginess and all the meaner and craven lusts of our nature to get beyond and above the greed of getting and keeping into the high and divine realm of giving. The man who follows out the great vow of an entire consecration of himself to Christ, with the high purpose of using all that he has and all that he gets for God and human welfare, will find this grace of giving the very best means of spiritual growth. Let love and unselfishness take the throne of a human heart, and all the other graces of a noble character will come in and take their place. How vast the contrast in character, in personal worthiness, in public esteem, in conscious happiness, between the hoarder and the giver, the miser and the generous man, the man who lives to grasp and draw in and hide away under the locks and keys of penuriousness, and the man whose soul is full of kindness, his mind of charitable intents, and his

hands of blessings for his fellow-men! How poor the one, how rich the other!

Giving enlarges a man. It develops all that is good in him. It stirs him with higher impulses. It makes him a holier and happier man. But it must be giving in Christ's sense and after his example—not pittances out of coffers of plenty, not crumbs from a heavily-laden table, not drops out of an ocean of abundance, not the heedless and thoughtless gift that has behind it no impulses of a stirred and loving heart. It must be giving that starts at the soul's centre, that is felt, that costs something, that triumphs over self, that gets satisfaction and relief in its longing to bless only by giving. Such giving would be salvation to some men. The only hope for them is that they will hear and obey the command of the Lord Jesus: "Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor."

But this certainty of a divine return to the giver rests also on the direct promise of God. Here is the giver's security. What is given is not lost. It is a deposit in the exchequer of Heaven. It may be returned in direct earthly blessings. Thus it was promised of old, "Thou shalt surely give unto the poor of thy brethren; thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest him, because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto."

So also stands the promise still: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give: not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work; (as it is written, He hath dispersed abroad: he hath given to the

poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now He that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness.) Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God."

God loveth the cheerful giver. He is able to bless him, and he will bless him. He will make his grace abound toward him, supplying all his need and furnishing him with all-sufficiency, that he may go on to give and abound in every good work. He shall have riches of every kind to spend on every kind of charity. The recompenses of Him who delighteth in mercy shall come in bountiful measure upon the generous and open-handed giver. Such is the clear promise of God. Give, give freely, generously, and God will give. Give, and he will multiply the means to give and increase the spirit of giving. Take care of his cause, and he will take care of all your wants. Let not the invisible character of the security be any stumbling-block to faith. Were there more faith in God, there would be more giving to the poor. Neither the overwhelming evidence of experience nor the clear promises of God avail to expel this cloven-footed demon of selfishness from the human heart. Thorough believers will be large givers.

II. The final thought of the apostle is the *connection of giving and thanksgiving*. Every gift is a "bounty," a "blessing," a "thanksgiving." It is a free thank-offering out of the blessings God has given. True giving rises out of the catalogue of hard duties into the rank of happy privileges. The root of all giving is love, and love is full of thankfulness. Love is the desire to give something—money, bread, help, a cup of water, our-

selves. It is a desire to bless, to make good, godlike and happy. It blesses itself; it creates thanksgiving in others.

And then, as the mind and heart of the apostle are filled with a sense of what a great blessing is this spirit of free and glad and generous giving both to the giver and to the receiver, he ends abruptly the discussion with the well-known sentence, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable Gift!" He rises from all human giving to the divine, the gift of the Saviour. He contrasts our feeble gifts with the unspeakable one. He inspires our giving with that. He links our giving to that. To give is to be like God. He gives because "God is love." He redeemed the world by giving: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." He is the eternally blessed One because he is for ever giving. The life of the God-man was a sublime giving. He gave sympathy, kind words, healing, sight, hearing. He fed the poor with bread, the penitent with pardons. "He gave himself." Giving is Christ-like. He who would be like God and like the Saviour of men, who would enlarge and ennable his whole nature, who would expel all petty meannesses and greed from his soul, who would have the smile of God upon him, who would help to fill the world with a general jubilee of thanksgiving, must give—give according to his ability, give promptly, cheerfully, bountifully, trusting in God. If the heart is cold, warm it up by giving. Give till the feeling comes. Do what duty requires and love demands, and the heart and will to do will soon follow. Give until body, soul and spirit find the blessedness of being like the great Giver. Every man needs to give, more than he needs to receive. For Jesus' sake, for man's sake, for his own sake, should every Christian man learn the divine art of giving.

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

BY THE REV. S. J. MCPHERSON, D. D.

June 1.—Gal. 4:1-16.

IN these words Paul gives a threefold account of Christian liberty. He begins by *defining* “the liberty where-with Christ hath made us free” (vs. 1-7). He proceeds next to *remonstrate* with the Galatian Christians against their special danger of relapsing into “the weak and beggarly elements” of their former bondage (vs. 8-11). Then, recalling the blessed liberty with which they set out on the new life, he closes with a *personal appeal*, beseeching them to stand fast with him as sons of God on the platform of a free salvation in Jesus Christ (vs. 12-16).

The *definition*, in which Paul’s whole discussion naturally takes root, discovers the secret of Christian liberty in the filial confidence of believers toward God. Sonship is the touchstone of real freedom. This fundamental fact finds ample illustration in the life of the family. A son, while still a minor, is detained in many things at the inferior standpoint of a servant. His minority indeed does not abate one particle of his father’s love. He is the sure heir, and so the potential “lord,” of great honors and possessions. Yet, even though he were a prince of Wales, for his own good he must during his immaturity be denied liberty of his person and control of his property, and

be kept under guardians who shall train him and stewards who shall manage his affairs. But with the arrival of his majority all these restrictions drop off, and, coming of age at the appointed time, he stands both mature and free. Analogously, in God's great human family all men are indeed his children, but until they arrive at the maturity of filial faith in Christ they learn only the *a b c* of spiritual freedom. They are "in bondage under the elements of the world," the elementary lessons (as Alford said) of outward things. The visible, tangible, external, transient influences of sense, like so many "tutors and governors," enslave us until Christ redeems us and the Holy Spirit ripens us into mellow sonship. In Paul's day this family law of development toward liberty found representative (but not, I think, exclusive) expression in Judaism. These waiting Hebrews were, in a special sense, God's minor children, kept long in tutelage to rites and types, to precepts and formulas. The Law was their schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. Sinai thundered fierce instructions. Under priests and prophets they toiled thence onward, pilgrims wearier than Bunyan's, to find that desired Calvary which was to snatch slavish burdens from their bent backs for ever. At last God struck the hour of "the fullness of time." The completion and consequent decadence of the Jewish dispensation, the widespread leaven of Greek thought and art, the universal dominion of organized laws which made all roads lead to Rome and through Rome to Bethlehem, mankind's disgust at bottomless sin and despair of human remedies, with ominous, instinctive hope of divine help, and we know not what deeper, even as yet fathomless, purpose of Him whose mills grind slow but exceeding fine, marked all things ready for the supreme era of our race's history. Thereupon came our Redeemer, God's own Son, begotten to fulfill

the divine law, to take away human guilt, and thus, having “power on earth to forgive sin,” to emancipate his enslaved brothers to the full privileges of God’s adopted sons. He first set them actually free from bondage by justifying them as guilty, and then sent the Comforter to waken the consciousness of sonship and heirship in every freedman. Hence Christian liberty was shown to consist in the realized spirit of adoption; and the test of freedom is met only by those who can look filially into the face of God and, like a returned prodigal, heartily call him, “Abba, Father.”

Appreciating these things as himself a captive delivered, Paul’s *remonstrance* against the Galatian peril of slipping back into the wretched slavery of the past is most natural. These Christians of Galatia were, at least for the most part, converted heathen. The “elements” to which they had been in bondage were not merely inferior and temporary, like those divinely appointed for the nonage of the Old-Testament Church, but positively worthless, and even generally evil. They had not, like the Jews, so much worshiped the true God blindly and formally as they had done “service unto them which by nature are no gods.” Their redemption by Christ to the gracious liberty of the gospel had rescued them from a worse slavery than that of the Jews. They ought, accordingly, to have set a higher estimate upon their deliverance. But, “foolish Galatians”! they had been so “bewitched” (3:1) by false teachers that they desired again to be in bondage—if not to their old false gods, at least to the carnal legalism of the Jews. Instead of accepting redemption as the gracious, unpurchasable gift of the divine-human Self-sacrificer, and resting content in the free life of faith, they were becoming entangled in the

harsh yoke of ceremonialism. They observed "days, and months, and times, and years," as though by the hardship and self-contempt of such ritualistic slaveries they could merit or buy salvation for themselves. Forgetting that at the very first it was not they who discovered God, but God who discovered them in their unconscious thraldom, they were turning back to those childish rudiments of religion which are so pitifully "weak" in comparison with the omnipotence of the justifying Christ, and so much worse than "beggarly" in comparison with the rich and manifold grace of God. It was exchanging crowns for shackles, kisses for stripes, sonship for slavery.

It was, too, a cruel and stupid waste of Paul's precious labors among them. With distress of mind and affection of heart he makes a personal appeal to them to recover themselves from this miserable lapsing. Conscious of his own liberty, he beseeches them to follow his example. Using all helps and means of grace, he trusts to none. He puts the entire emphasis of his Christian life upon his faith, and not upon his formal observances. The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. He becomes in things indifferent all things to all men—to the Jews a Jew, to the Gentiles a Gentile—that Christ may in the great essentials become all in all. He disclaims any selfish interest in their course as Christians. He appeals to the memory of their first love with its delightful freedom and power. He assures them that his present urgency and severity are the outcome of his eagerness to help them in truth. He condemns, praises, warns with vigorous argument, wins with the wooing of a lowered voice, with the alternate chill and heat of an anxious father who would win back his recreant, mistaken, suffering children who enslave their spirits with the impediments of the flesh.

Regarding Paul as the Lord's model freeman and the

Galatian Christians as his representative freedmen, who as yet imperfectly realize their liberty, let us mark some lessons which this emancipation proclamation of the gospel may be offering to us.

1. The most abject slavery of all is that experienced by the irreligious. It is true that the human heart at first sight takes the opposite view—that religion is a binding of the soul by divine laws, and, in particular, that Christianity brings us into subjection to Christ. But the true view, presented in these verses, intimates that religion, instead of adding new obligations to our lives, merely recognizes the obligations which belong inherently to our nature. The moral law of God binds all of us, independently of our voluntary acceptance of it, no less than the law of gravitation. Obedience to either is but the acknowledgment of existing facts, and is therefore the attainment of freedom. For real freedom is the harmonious adjustment of our lives to the environment of fact amidst which God has placed us.

Hagar and Ishmael, sent wandering through the wilderness, may have seemed freer, in the unbeliever's sense, than Sarah and Isaac, who remained in the confinement of the camp subject to Abraham. Yet how soon that freedom from the father brought them to death's door for thirst! The Galatians, and even Paul himself, by their lives before conversion illustrated the same truth. Paul likewise usurped power to be a proud Pharisee and a murderous persecutor, enslaved to his own prejudices and passions. Such false liberty is sure to end in pain. If it despises the facts of physiology, it incurs disease. If it ignores the facts of reason, it becomes more or less insane. If it disputes the facts of conscience, it disparages the image of God in its own humanity and attempts to lead the life of beasts—always a vain and dreadful attempt for a man.

2. Perfected Christian liberty belongs to the completely filial sons of God alone. Its model as well as author is Jesus, the first-born among many brethren. Its root-principle is faith—the faith which works by love. Its seat is the heart of man, rather than his reason or his resolutions. Its distinctive quality is something far nobler than stoical submission, far sweeter than dutiful obedience—the spirit of adoption, which surpasses them as sonship surpasses service. Yet it never resists right authority, for that is willfulness, which contradicts our natural instinct of dependence. Nor is it ever inconsistent with law, for independence of law is not liberty, but license. Like love, of which it is a part, liberty is the fulfilling of the law. Our Lord, who “came not to destroy, but to fulfill,” teaches expressly that on the one word *love* “hang all the law and the prophets.” Accordingly, liberty can never chafe under the external restrictions of law, because it consents heartily to law’s essential reason. The Golden Rule, for example, which is a summary of Christian liberty, reaffirms the Ten Commandments by kindly veiling their outward prohibitions while it brings out their inward meaning and principle.

In the preceding chapter (see especially Gal. 3 : 23, 24) we are even taught that law may, if not abused, become the stepping-stone to liberty, just as John the Baptist was a stepping-stone to Christ. The shell forms before the kernel, and falls off after the kernel is ripe. If a Christian beginner is guided by the letter of the law until he becomes mature enough to appreciate its spirit, he will never need to emancipate himself from those wrong habits which are fatal to liberty. A child must obey its father’s commands as though it were a servant, without asking for the reason of them, so long as he is incapable of understanding it. But when he becomes a man he must

"put away childish things." Rules must melt into principles, duties into privileges, the reign of law into the liberty of love. As Carlyle said, "*Men* ought . . . to 'swallow their formulas;' there is no freedom till then." "Of inexpressible advantage is it that a man have 'an eye instead of a pair of spectacles merely,' that, seeing through the formulas of things, and men 'making away' with many a formula, he see into the thing itself, and so know it and be master of it."

The means of attaining Christian liberty are two. One is personal justification by Jesus, who as Mediator (Gal. 3 : 19, 24, 26; 4 : 4, 5) reconciles us to God. A man can no more live freely while he is guilty before the law of God than a tropical plant can grow freely in a northern winter. The other means is accepting the gift of "the Spirit of his Son." This Spirit rouses in us the sense of sonship, and voices our filial prayer, "Abba, Father." Christ's work was external to us, and we are to accept it. The Spirit's work is within us, and we are to admit him. When both have wrought out their works for us we realize perfected Christian liberty.

3. Like the Galatians, all Christians are at times more or less tempted to return into their old bondage. One of these temptations arises out of mistaken views of our spiritual condition in the sight of God. False teaching, ill-health, great afflictions, surprising sins, or some other snare of Satan, will so depress our hearts that we reproach ourselves as hypocrites or distrust our Saviour as unfriendly. Another of these temptations is met in the enormous power of habit. If habit binds us to courses intrinsically evil, it simply forms a part of the general slavery of sin. Yet even where the actions which it dictates are themselves harmless, it may reduce us to bondage. Its danger is that it should compel us to act with-

out having a reason for acting. By making our acts mechanical and compulsory it destroys our liberty; for that is never liberty which is unintelligent and involuntary. But a chief temptation to relapse into bondage is found in the constant tendency of human nature to substitute some meritorious work or ceremony of its own for the free grace of the gospel.

The Galatians having begun in the spirit were tempted to imagine that they were to be made perfect by the flesh (Gal. 3 : 3). Hence they observed days, and months, and times, and years as though these things were necessary to salvation. But human nature is the same in us as in them, and we do well to inquire what fetich we may be tempted to set up in lieu of Christ's finished atonement.

4. Paul in dealing with these Galatians shows in what manner teachers should try to lead souls to Christian liberty. He does not attempt to drive them out of slavery, but rather to open their eyes to the facts and to win them to freedom. Strenuous apostle that he was, his chief instrument is persuasion by the truth. His rebukes are bathed in love (v. 11; cf. vs. 19, 20). He asserts the fact of their existing sonship because they believe in Christ (v. 7). He appeals to their filial feelings (v. 6). He rallies them on their capacity to perceive truth (v. 16). He recalls the kindness with which they had received him at first as a brother, because, although his person was even repulsive, he came to tell them of the Saviour who was the Son of God their great Father (vs. 14, 15). Above all, he offers himself as an example of a freedman, who redeemed by Christ from monstrous slavery as Pharisee and persecutor, was enjoying blessed Christian liberty (v. 12). Thus he recommended what he experienced. He was letting his light shine, that men should see his good works and glorify his Father in heaven.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

BY THE REV. ERSKINE N. WHITE, D. D.

June 8.—Rom. 3:19-31.

In this passage we reach the turning-point of the argument of Paul, and find disclosed the very heart of the gospel of the Son of God. Up to the end of the twentieth verse the argument has been destructive. It has marched forward with irresistible steps, demolishing one false dependence after another, proving that Gentile and Jew alike are under condemnation and beyond the possibility of being justified, either by the "law within in their hearts" or by that revealed in the "oracles of God." "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," are pronounced upon "every soul of man that doeth evil;" and under that condemnation both Jew and Gentile are proved to have come.

As the apostle draws the picture of the position of men under the law, the scene grows more and more gloomy, the clouds darker and more lurid, the muttering of the thunders of coming destruction more and more distinct, until at the words, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God," a horror of great darkness settles down as a pall upon all mankind. The apostle has proved his point, and has but to add, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin," and he is ready to face the other way and

disclose the light of the gospel of the Son of God. With the word "But" of the twenty-first verse the gloom begins to break, and, in a moment as it were, the scene is transformed by the incoming of a flood of glory; the mystery of ages is revealed and the whole substance of the gospel unfolded. Though "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," they may yet "be justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

I. In attempting to grasp the supreme truth contained in the scripture before us we start with the solemn statement, already abundantly proved and with which the lesson opens, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (v. 20).

That Paul here means by "deeds of the law" more than the requirements of the ceremonial law is evident from the fact that in summing up his argument he includes both Jews and Gentiles. He has shown how those who are ignorant of ceremonial law or revealed truth are condemned by the law written in their hearts, and then has proved from their own Scriptures that the Jews also are declared universally guilty. "There is none righteous, no, not one." Thus the solemn conclusion: No flesh shall be justified in the sight of God, for "*all have sinned*, and come short of the glory of God."

What, then? Are all hopelessly lost? or, Is the law to be set aside and are sinners to be pardoned despite the claims of justice? This is the dilemma to which the resistless logic of the apostle leads, and human wisdom finds no way of escape.

But where human wisdom ends divine revelation begins, and we have unfolded the plan that declares God's

"righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (v. 26).

That we may better understand this wonderful assurance, let us consider the particular statements by which it is explained.

I. "*The righteousness of God without the law is manifested*" (v. 21).

By "the righteousness of God" the apostle does not mean, as at first glance might be supposed, God's personal attribute of righteousness. On the contrary, he means something which becomes, through the grace of God, the attribute of the sinner, and which is to stand in the place of the "deeds of the law" or the "righteousness which is of the law," by which the sinner cannot be justified. It is a "righteousness of God," because God is its author, and it is his free gift unto all and upon all them that believe. In God's sight and before the bar of justice it avails instead of that personal righteousness which the law demands, and unto which no soul has ever attained. Elsewhere Paul, when speaking of winning Christ, adds: "That I may be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9).

Evidently, this righteousness which is now manifested, if it is to avail, must be the full equivalent of that in place of which it stands. It must be a righteousness which fully satisfies the claims of justice, which establishes the sanctions of the law, which honors God's holiness, and which transforms him to whom it is imputed from a criminal at the bar into an accepted son of God. Such righteousness can be only that of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, and he to whom it is imputed stands "justified" before the bar of God. By the expres-

sion "justified," used so frequently by Paul as denoting the position of him who has been invested with the "righteousness of God," it is not meant that the justified one is acquitted by the law or declared innocent in the past, but that he is treated as innocent because the claims of justice in his case have been already fully satisfied. The expression is what theologians call "forensic;" that is, an expression belonging to the courts. A man is forensically innocent or justified who after trial is acquitted, even though there be a moral certainty that he did that of which he was accused.

2. This righteousness becomes the sinner's, and he is justified freely, only "*through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood*" (vs. 24, 25).

Here comes in the story of the cross with all its sublime and holy meaning—a story repeated upon every page of God's word, familiar to us from childhood, old as the decrees of God, and yet new to every awakened sinner.

It is in vain that we attempt to fathom all the depths of its meaning; but we know that "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son," that he might become "the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2); we know that the "Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28), and that he "bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). The suffering Saviour stood in our place, assumed our debt, submitted himself in our stead to the penalty of the law, and delivered us from the wrath to come."

The "redemption that is in Christ Jesus" does not consist in his teaching and his example, sublime and holy as they are, nor even in his personal influence, ineffable as is its power upon our hearts and lives, but in the fact that he was the *propitiatory sacrifice* to which pointed

all the types and figures of the Jewish ritual—"the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

3. *This "righteousness" is a free gift to the guilty soul.*

We are "justified freely by his grace" (v. 24). It is the grace of God that provides the way of escape through the sacrifice of his only Son, whom he gives freely because his love and compassion are boundless. Thus is provided the "righteousness" with which we are to be clothed; a "*righteousness of investiture*" it has been well called, freely bestowed upon all who will receive it. We have nothing which we can offer in return. In our hand is no available purchase-money, and yet if we return to our Father's house we hear upon the instant the command, "Bring forth the best robe and put it upon him."

The glory of the sacrifice upon Calvary is its absolute sufficiency. It is complete in itself, and sufficient for all. The atonement was fully made, and the "righteousness of Christ" with which we are invested needs not to be supplemented by any good works, whether of morality, of devotion or of self-sacrifice. These are demanded by the gratitude of the ransomed soul, but they are no part of the ransom, which was completely paid when the Saviour bowed his head and cried, "*It is finished.*"

So, too, this "righteousness" is a free gift, because it is "unto all and upon all them that believe" (v. 22). "*There is no difference.*" He who has lived most perfectly according to the law of morality, who has blessed his fellow-men most abundantly, who has attained to the closest fellowship with his Saviour and Master, owes all to the grace of God, and is saved as a redeemed sinner only through the sacrifice of Christ; while he who has sounded the lowest depths of iniquity, who has outraged all law human and divine, is not beyond the reach

of the grace of God offered in Christ Jesus. Those dying words of the crucified robber, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," have been recorded that we may never doubt that we are "justified freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

4. *This righteousness is to be attained by faith. It is "by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe"* (v. 22).

The redemption is complete in the sacrifice of the Son of God; it is freely offered to all, and yet, as man is free to accept or reject the offered mercy, there is this one limitation: the righteousness of Christ avails only for "*them that believe.*" So absolutely essential is the element of faith that the apostle repeatedly declares that we "are justified by faith;" and, following his example, we speak of the doctrine of "justification by faith." By this expression, however, we are not taught that we are justified in return for our faith, as a reward for its manifestation. "The redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," is the only ground of our justification; but we take hold upon Christ's righteousness and appropriate all the blessings of his redeeming work by the simple act of faith. Having done this, all is done. "*Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

Such being the teaching of our scripture, it is evident that it embosoms the great central doctrine of our religion. There is (1) a "*righteousness of God*" which, imputed to man, avails instead of the "*righteousness which is of the law;*" (2) it is provided through the "*redemption of Christ;*" (3) it is offered to all men "*freely by his grace;*" and (4) it is accepted by "*by faith of (in) Jesus Christ*" alone.

II. But it is one thing to believe the doctrine of justification by faith; it is quite another to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and to have attained the salvation provided by his death. Let us, then, ask, What does this doctrine mean for us? What is the faith by which we appropriate the righteousness of Christ, and how is it to be manifested?

No question is more frequently asked by the troubled soul than, How am I to exercise saving faith? The difficulty arises from the misconception that faith is some mysterious attainment differing from anything of which we have experience in other departments of life, to be attained only after a long struggle with the sins which stand in the way of peace. The difficulty is often heightened from misunderstanding the familiar expression "*justification by faith*," as if faith in some way was the meritorious ground of our justification. Notice, then—

1. *Faith is the simplest of acts.* It is not a transcendent grace to be acquired only by long exertion or to be realized by protracted self-examination. It may indeed grow purer and brighter in the progress of Christian life, but the faith that saves may be exercised upon the instant by the soul which, conscious of sin, longs for life through the blessed Saviour. Nor does our faith in any sense become our justification or provide it. That is already provided through the sacrifice of Christ, and awaits our acceptance or rejection. Our faith makes it ours. Thus, faith has been well called "*the hand*" by which we grasp salvation freely offered by God through Jesus Christ.

Faith is "to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and "to believe on him" is simply *to take him at his word*, as we would any other faithful one in whose honesty and

power we had full confidence. Thus, this faith does not, to our consciousness, differ from the trust that we may exercise in other departments of life when such trust is implicit. It may not necessarily exclude every doubt, but it must be such as makes us willing to risk everything upon Him who offers thus to save us.

You are lost in the shades of a pathless wilderness; you wander until, exhausted and disheartened, you are convinced that it only remains for you to lie down and die. At that instant you hear footsteps approaching; there stands before you a man clothed in the livery of the King. You sob out your distress and danger. He answers that he has heard your cry for help, and has come to save you. He shows you his credentials. You look in his face: it is all honesty and compassion. He holds out his hand to support and guide you, and tells you to trust him absolutely and entirely. What does he mean? That you shall answer that every doubt and fear are gone? That you already see the path plainly before you? That every anxiety for the future is fled? No! He simply means that you are so to trust him that you will gladly risk everything upon his words—put your hand in his, and without questioning go whither he leads you.

Such is the faith that Christ asks of the weary, lost soul.

2. *It is evident that faith in Christ and our coming to him are simultaneous.* Here analogies drawn from the experience of natural life break down. If in ordinary life we are to commit great interests to the hand of a friend, we are conscious of two distinct acts: we make up our mind that we can trust him, and then we deliver over into his hands our property, our interests or our lives, as the case may be. Not so in the commitment

of ourselves to Christ. When our hearts are convinced, then by our very act of faith we accept him as our Saviour, and the work is done.

What, then, must precede this? Evidently, a rational conviction that his words are true and that he is the promised Redeemer, a humble recognition of our own sinful and lost condition, and a certainty that "there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." Such assurance may be the calm decision resulting from early Christian nurture and godly training; it may be the sudden, irresistible conviction of one arrested and stricken down in a career of open sin; it may be more or less complete and recognized, but it must be strong enough to determine the act of the soul. The father of the lunatic child at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration had reached this point. He had turned to Jesus as a last resort, assured that there was no other hope of relief, and yet his words imply a doubt: "*If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us.*" Jesus throws his own word back upon him: "*If thou canst believe.*" In an agony of emotion the poor father confesses his unbelief, and in confessing it overcomes it and casts himself upon the Master's love: "*Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.*"

3. Finally: *Faith is the free act of the awakened soul.*

This is none the less true because it is also true that it is the gift of the Holy Spirit. There is a divine side and a human side to every gracious act of the soul, but there is no more a contradiction in this than is involved in every act of our daily life.

Because the Saviour has said, "No man cometh unto me except the Father which sent me draw him," there are those who assume that if they are ever to come they must feel, as it were, cords around them actually draw-

ing them whether they will or no, and that then they will consent as to an irresistible power which overrides their inclination. Nothing is farther from the truth. The influence of God upon the soul is in exact harmony with his relation to every other act of life. No man is brought to Christ against his will. By the sweet and blessed influence of the Holy Spirit his will is transformed, and, so far as his own consciousness can grasp the matter, it is he himself who freely makes the final decision that assures eternal life.

So it will be with you who hear to-day the offer of peace if you are to be justified by faith. The Holy Spirit is indeed influencing your heart and opening it to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, yet none the less does the responsibility of your life or death rest upon your own free choice.

Do you now accept the grace freely offered you? To you the Saviour, who has paid the penalty of your sin, offers the "righteousness of God," the "white robe" in which are clothed those who with palms in their hands stand before the throne crying, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Accept this gracious offer. Commit yourself unreservedly to Christ as your Saviour, and, "*being justified by faith,*" you shall have "*peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

THE BLESSEDNESS OF BELIEVERS.

BY THE REV. CHARLES L. THOMPSON, D. D.

June 15.—Rom. 8: 28-39.

DR. CHARLES HODGE calls this chapter “the sunlit summit of the word of God.” The passage of the lesson is its most glittering point. Life’s storms are below it. It is resplendent in the unshaded and unutterable love of God.

The characteristics of Paul’s style are nowhere more apparent than in the early part of this letter to the Romans, which culminates in the splendid oratorical outburst with which this chapter closes, and which, in the judgment of Longinus, ranked Paul as among the greatest of orators. The course of the apostle’s great argument moves on with increasing earnestness and passion. Like a stream too severely bounded, which by reason of its swiftness becomes agitated, Paul’s argument is sometimes confused by the noble passion of his intense spirit. He moves rapidly from thought to thought, keeping always, however, steadily before him the great goal of his argument. He is vindicating divine grace, founded on divine love and triumphing over human sin and guilt. Suddenly, as by an inspired rise of thought rather than as a direct result of his logic, he exclaims, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” His thought now flies in a glittering path, spanning from a past eternity of divine counsel to

a future eternity of human glory in a few swift words; and then, at the thirty-first verse, in a lofty and dramatic challenge, he affirms the everlasting security and blessedness of the believer in Jesus. Then, to the end of the chapter, he advances to a climax than which none more effective ever was written. The impassioned river has shot through the rapids of a triumphant argument, and now moves, broad, deep, stately and calm, to the great sea of the love of God, in which it sinks to rest.

The following are the landmarks of the apostle's reasoning:

The text in an inclusive way presents the theme, which the remaining verses amplify. It is a world-wide and prophetic statement. All things, in all places, and in all time and unto the eternities, combine for the good of those that love God. This is the most daring utterance of Christian faith. It is more than a mere declaration that all things will be overruled for the good of the Christian. Our faith in this direction is often negative only. Nothing shall harm the believer. Evil agencies will be paralyzed or held back. But Paul's language is more aggressive, his philosophy more comprehensive. It is that all things co-operate for the Christian. They "work together." Every part of nature has an energy of its own, and all those energies are confluent and form that river of divine grace which bears the Christian to his glory, so that even our disasters are more than overruled. They synergize with our mercies and produce our highest blessings. The alembic of God's gracious purpose is as broad and deep as time. Into it flow the elements we have counted antagonistic to us or to each other. But, lo! they flow together; their particles, by a wonderful chemistry of grace, actively and energetically

unite, and the end is a world-wide and age-long good for the people of God.

Paul's philosophy reads like the last page of the world's natural science. What are our scientists telling us of the energy of Nature but this same truth on a lower level? Nothing is lost, no blow is miscalculated, no destruction destroys. Along a path of apparent deaths and failures the world is moving toward a higher life; and to that higher life all Nature contributes—the health and the disease, the medicine and the poison, the light and the dark.

But in this view Nature has harmony only when its science is applied to universals. To the individual sickness and death are still disasters. Paul's philosophy takes up the word where science stops. Science says the strongest survives by a law of struggle. Paul says the weakest survives by a law of grace into which all the forces of the world are wrought. He has a cosmic view, as long as history and as broad as human life, and he sees all things work for good—not to the race, not to the strong, but to him who truly loves God. The more science reveals the breadth of the world and its complications, the more is its unity apparent. And, so however wide our vision of the factors that enter into human experience, the wheels within wheels that determine the result of our lives, the more clear is that divine harmony by which all these diverse and conflicting influences are made to subserve the final good of the soul.

The result comes not by accident nor as the end of many blind experiments. Ezekiel in his vision saw wheels with wheels within them, wondrously moving from earth to heaven. The mystery of the wheels is explained, however, by the statement that the wheels were dominated by a living creature, and "the spirit of

the living creature was in the wheels." That spirit determined the unity of their movements. So is God in events that affect the Christian. If ever on a life-review we marvel at the harmony of the various wheels, let us remember the Spirit of God is in all their convolutions. He directs that combined action by which "all things" seem to work as of an individual intelligence and energy.

To give a sense of the security to those for whom all things work for good, they are connected with a plan in the mind of God. This plan the apostle next briefly sketches. The blessedness of believers needs to be contemplated from the divine side. Who could indulge a sense of security if it depended on his love to God? How long would "things" combine for us if the combinations depended on our own steadfastness? Could even Paul get comfort out of his own doctrine if his love to God were not fed and sustained by something above it? He hastens, therefore, to add that while the harmony of all things is for those who, from the human side, love God, it is confirmed to us by a divine counsel; it is to "them who are called according to his purpose." By one swift rise of thought he anchors our variable and fluctuating feeling to the throne of an eternal purpose. What is the plan according to which that purpose moves?

First: It is one that reaches from eternity past: "For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate." How secure is that love to God which thus has a connection with a dateless purpose in the mind of God! The believer's blessedness has its roots in eternity. Science tells us that from the very beginning of its operations Nature works consistently to its far-off and final result. So the believer's security and happiness are inwrought with the primal thought of God. Redemption is not an

afterthought. "In the beginning was the Word." God's thought of mercy is coeval with his creative energy.

Second: This sovereign and eternal purpose includes character: "Predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." There shall be a family likeness between the Lord and his followers. The divine purpose had respect not only to the end, but to all the means that should make that end worthy of God. They misrepresent Paul's doctrine of the divine purpose who lay such stress on the end as obscures or ignores the steps leading thereunto. God's saints are not more surely predestined to heaven than they are predestined to be like Christ in this world. If in any of them the latter purpose has manifestly failed, if they are not being conformed to Christ's image, they may be quite sure the former purpose of salvation at the end of this life has never existed. As some one has said, the effectual calling is the link between the predestination and the glory. That link reaches down to us. If we have not grasped it, if we are not following it, we may be quite sure the other links are not for us.

Third: This divine plan also secures righteousness in the legal sense. This is an additional argument for the believer's security: "Whom he hath called, them he also justified." It is not merely the matter of a dateless plan. It not only secures our increasing conformity to the image of Christ through the effectual calling of the Word and the Spirit, but it also adjusts our relations to God's law on principles of inevitable righteousness. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Fourth: This plan ends in glory: "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." These altar-stairs rise

through darkness up to God. It could not be otherwise. Our love might fail, and all that is connected with it, but God's plan, reaching from a past eternity, sustained by his justice as well as his love, and made effectual in the calling of those whom it concerns, cannot fail. It is of the very nature of God that the end should be glory. A mathematician studying a curve knows where it will go on the laws under which it has been projected. Measure God's plan of redemption as it was projected from his throne, or as it sweeps over darkened Calvary, or even as its broken lines appear in the believer's soul, the conclusion is the same: it ends in glory.

Fifth: This plan has love for its foundation: "He spared not his own Son;" "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son;" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Not only is there intelligence within the wheels, but that intelligence is loving. It is an eternal thought that comprehends all things. Christ himself is comprehended in the infinite love of God. So Paul's climax developed into that noble panegyric on the love of God from which nothing shall separate us. He does not rest even in the divine purpose until he has followed it to its spring in the divine nature. That which animates, sustains and directs the wonderful plan that goes from eternity to eternity is God's love for sinners, and the evidence of that love is in the gift of his Son.

Sixth: The argument from divine love is inclusive; it is the argument from the greater to the less: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Christ is the guarantee of every other blessing. He is the pledge of "all things" that shall work

for our good. Such a pledge is greatly needed to anchor our faith in the times when many things are against us. We had doubted whether storms would drive us home if we had not seen the Captain of our salvation with us in our sufferings and failures. But if Christ is with us and for us, who can be against us? If it is Christ that died, and that lives, and that makes intercession, who will condemn us? As against our own self-judgment and the attacks of our enemies we may always take refuge in the fact that God spared not his own Son. His coming and loving us and dying for us means our triumph over all our enemies. The great sacrifice makes manifest the great divine purpose, founded on infinite divine love; so Paul says in another place, "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Indeed, it were enough to win Christ, though in so doing all else must be lost. To battle "all things" and to be overcome by them; to be the victims of the great enemies and ever harassed by the little annoyances of life; to be left stripped and wounded by the wayside, and to have even our requests of heaven denied, and only the final salvation granted,—were not this enough? But if God has given his Son for us, it means that he hath set his love upon us, and love in any realm claims all things for its own. Human love fails because it cannot command things for its beloved. But the divine love hath no restraints, and a universe is not too much for God to lavish on the objects of his affection.

Seventh: The sense of peace and security which comes to the believer as the result of this comprehensive and loving divine plan may be absolutely unchangeable. It is not always so. We often fear that we shall fail at last of the fruits of the love of Christ; but in proportion as we rise to Paul's broad view, and trace divine

purpose, and work back to the great heart of God, and read the fact of redemption as God's pledge to his people, will our peace flow like a river. In that proportion will we enter into sympathy with Paul's challenge: "Who shall separate us from the love of God?" And with breath as calm as his we will be able to call the list of possible or actual disasters, and challenge the pains of this life, the terror of death and the mysteries of eternity to do their worst. This challenge, let us remember, was set in a very circle of flame kindled against the early Church. Tribulation and distress and persecution and sword meant something real and urgent. But no flame can burn between Christ and his saints, and there is no room to strike the edge of the sharpest sword between them. The flame becomes Elijah's chariot, and the sword only points the way of victory. The saint is not only conqueror; he over-conquers.

Perhaps some will say, "Such raptures of challenge and triumphant hope are for saints in great crises. They were possible in a martyr-age, when on waves of fiery conflict the Church was lifted to such world-wide views as Paul's experience here supposes. But for us in commoner days and tamer life this noble philosophy of faith is more difficult. The anchor-cable tense in a storm rises into view; in quiet water it hangs limp and out of sight. So a commonplace experience gives less vividness to the power of Christ than appears in storm."

It is even so. Our serene days have their peculiar perils, but the sense of the unfailing love of Christ is independent of our experience; it rests on the testimony of God's word; it is the conclusion of Paul's argument. And he enumerates with particular and inclusive care all the agencies that could possibly disturb us in quiet or stormy time, and in words that span every human con-

dition he declares his persuasion that *nothing* shall separate us from the love of Christ. He even descends from the impassioned feeling of the preceding verses. His style assumes the breadth and depth of a calm river. He is not speaking out of his feelings; he is summing up the testimony of God's word. Speaking like a prophet, he is assured that no mystery of death and no power of this life—that no higher powers, whether present or future, and no creature, from whatever depth or height—shall be able to separate us from the care of Christ.

So ends the most triumphant vindication of grace that ever was written. Ever since, the history of the Church has been putting its seal upon it. Death is no longer formidable, he has been vanquished so often. Life more and more is seen to be the arena for great victories of love. The shadowy principalities that girdle this world have brightened the power of Christ they would obscure, as the dark mountains only revealed the chariots of fire that were around the prophet. The "things present" in their sharpest antagonism to the Church have only helped it on. And "the things to come" have given an inspiring outlook to faith and an heroic impulse to love. So when time has done its best and worst, the passion of its last storm will put the final seal on the argument and conclusion of the apostle. Then the universe will know—what the saints know now—that

"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose
He will not, he will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
He'll never, no never, no never forsake."

OBEDIENCE TO LAW.

BY THE REV. HENRY M. BOOTH, D. D.

June 22.—Rom. 13: 1-10.

WHEN the apostle announced these principles of government, Nero was the emperor of Rome and his deputies were the officials of the provinces. The forms of law were respected, while corruption and oppression were everywhere prominent. An appeal unto Cæsar was the protection of the Roman citizen in any part of the world, and yet the palaces witnessed the most shameful debaucheries and the most brutal murders. Christians could hardly fail to inquire as to their duty toward magistrates who were monsters of vice or cruelty, and toward laws which contradicted the commands of Christ. Delicate questions were arising between masters and slaves where both were members of the household of faith. In what way was the benign and holy authority of Christ to become supreme in the family, in the State and in the Church?

Having clearly presented the doctrine of his Epistle—the righteousness of God in its nature and effects—the apostle proceeds to apply this truth to the practical interests of life. In so doing he is compelled to consider the relations of Christianity to existing forms of government, and thus to lay down principles of universal value—the principles which gradually revolutionized the Roman

empire and introduced the liberty of our own favored republic. These principles are three in number:

I. If "the powers that be are ordained of God," then government must exist for the sake of the governed.

II. If "rulers are the ministers of God to thee for good," then magistrates must be respected and obeyed so long as they are faithful to their sacred trusts.

III. If "love is the fulfilling of the law," then the perpetuity of government and the welfare of the people can best be secured by Christian loyalty.

I. "The powers that be are ordained of God;" then government must exist for the sake of the governed.

This principle marks out a safe path between the over-hanging cliffs of monarchical assumption, upon which are written such inscriptions as the proud boast of the king of France, "I am the state," and the morasses of communistic Socialism, which are prepared to swallow up all authority and law and order and to reduce social life to chaos. For it recognizes the divine origin of governments, and insists at the same that governments are for the sake of the people. God had the welfare of intelligent creatures in view when he instituted governments. He is the God of order. Men and women must be under restraint. Any form of government is better than no government at all. The worst possible social condition is anarchy, the rule of the mob. Our missionaries in Turkey are safer with the sultan at Constantinople than they could be if every Mohammedan should become a law unto himself. There is no more destructive cry than that the Commune shall take the place of the empire, the monarchy, the republic, in order that "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" may prevail. Paris has more than once

listened to this cry, and then has known the horrors of the barricades, when riot has taken possession of the streets.

While God's word urges obedience to "the powers that be," it does not indicate a decided preference as to forms of government. Under certain conditions an empire may be better than a monarchy, and under other conditions a republic may be better than either. The silence of God's word is golden. Any form of government will prove a blessing if the divine principles of government are honored, for the rights of the individual will be respected, while the rights of the government will also receive respect.

Thus there is a fine play of sympathy between the government and the governed, which was recognized by the wise men who wrote the Declaration of Independence. They saw "that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." When that statement was made it fairly startled the world. Men held their breath in amazement, and yet it was only the restatement in a public document of the apostle's principle. God made man, and God instituted governments, both with reference to the same end—*his glory*. There can be no conflict between the divine purposes. Man and government must co-operate. The government must consider the man, and the man must consider the government. "Government," says President Hopkins,* "has no right to be except as it is necessary to secure the ends of the individual in his social capacity; and it must there-

* *Moral Science*, p. 266.

fore be bound *so to be* as to secure these ends in the best manner." This is all that we can ask, and less than this we should never fail to demand. We make no appeal for favors; we claim our rights. Thus, revolutions, which have been the stepping-stones of liberty, are the assertions of determined men who realize that they are deprived of their just rights. In the dignity of offended manhood they rise up to remove the guilty ruler or to change the mode or form of government. To take part in such revolutions when sacred rights are at stake is the duty of every patriot. A ruler or a government whose efforts are put forth to keep men from reading God's word, from attending public worship, from training their children in the fear of God, must be overthrown if peaceful endeavors do not avail to change his policy, because such a policy conflicts with the evident purpose of God in creating man. "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." The interests of government must be closely watched by intelligence and virtue. Drunken voters and irresponsible demagogues must not be permitted to mutilate nor to destroy the structure which has been the work of sacrifice and prayer. The home is the true primary meeting, where the policy of government should be discussed. "Sunday-school politics," an expression recently coined, should be the training of the youth of the land to stand up for righteousness, liberty and temperance. This is the hope of the future. A God-fearing people may be trusted. Where the church and the school-house stand side by side, intelligence and virtue will be known.

"The riches of the commonwealth
Are free, strong minds, and hearts of health;
And more to her than gold or grain
The cunning hand and cultured brain;

Nor heeds the skeptic's puny hands
While near her school the church-spire stands;
Nor fears the blinded bigot's rule
While near the church-spire stands the school."

II. "Rulers are the ministers of God to thee for good;" then magistrates must be respected and obeyed so long as they are faithful to their trusts.

This principle grows naturally out of the preceding. If God has instituted governments, he must have designed that there shall be rulers to administer governments; and if governments are for the sake of the governed, rulers must have the same end in view. It is a most solemn thing, therefore, to accept a position of authority. Men do not appreciate this when they are so eager to become rulers. Their sense of responsibility to God is not what it should be, for authority means service. He who occupies the chief position is servant of all, "even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." He, the Lord of glory, has presented a splendid illustration of the life of a ruler. To act as "the minister of God to thee for good" he "humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "I am among you as he that serveth" was the distinction he claimed. The prevalence of his spirit would produce wonderful changes for the better in the exercise of authority. He has made known the standard. Rulers are approved or condemned by the verdict of impartial history as they regard or disregard his teaching and example.

So long as rulers are faithful, so long should they receive the respect and obedience of the people. And even if they are unfaithful, their position should screen them from irreverence or insult. That was a fine ex-

pression of self-control and loyalty which Paul gave when the high priest, Ananias, ordered that he should be smitten on the mouth. The apostle had just begun to speak. The popular indignation against him was intense. Ananias was sitting as a judge. Hardly had the first sentence fallen from the lips of the prisoner when this unjust order was given. Paul was indignant. With intense earnestness he cried out, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" Then, as certain who stood by said that he was addressing the high priest, he promptly apologized, declaring that he was ignorant of the fact. "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people" was the command of God through Moses which had never been repealed. Although Ananias was violating the law himself, although the apostle could not obey him, yet he would not intentionally offer disrespect to one who held the position of high priest.

This rule governed him wherever he went. He was always on the side of law and order. He met with many contemptible rulers. Felix and Herod and Gallio and Nero were not the men whose manhood Paul could admire, yet they were rulers, holding positions of authority. As such, he cordially supported them. This was true of most of the prominent early Christian workers. They were conservative, while at the same time they were aggressive. The truths which they preached were like the water-drops falling one by one into the crevices of the rocks, whose force presently tears the rocks asunder. The acceptance of those truths is the corrective of social evils. They work as leaven works in a measure of meal. The Christian estimate of man is destructive of all oppression. Such a letter as the

Epistle to Philemon sounds the doom of slavery; and as the strong have learned to bear the burdens of the weak, human life has gradually realized the blessedness of sympathy, of co-operation and of generous affection. This is the road along which we have been advancing. It has been a road over many hills and through many dark forests. But it has conducted us at last into the open country, where we now enjoy a breathing-place. The end is not yet. The fondest dreams of enthusiasts cannot surpass the well-founded hopes of the Christian. The old gospel has lost none of its power. If we faithfully use its truths, expressing them in the daily life of each community, we shall reach perfection. "In loving the highest excellence as personified in Christ the man unconsciously loves the happiness of all created beings, and is planted in the highest morality," "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

A common fault of our own age and country is disrespect toward rulers. How frequently we hear the names of presidents or governors mentioned with coarse familiarity or else with contempt! Children listen to remarks of parents or teachers which would actually lead them to suppose that the abodes of the vile had been searched to find candidates for office. We asperse the characters of public men. After they are dead we are ready to acknowledge our error and to rear monuments to their memory. But while they are living and active we are prone to slander them. We thought when the bullet of a fanatic took away from us the lamented President Garfield that our experience, so painful in connection with his noble life, would prove a lesson to us; but it has not. We are just as bad as we were. "These

things ought not so to be." Freedom is not license. A man's character is not to be traduced simply because he has been elevated to a place of honor. "Honor the king" is a command of inspiration which agrees well with every generous impulse of a patriotic soul. We shall lose nothing, and shall gain much, if we invest the rulers of the land with a dignity which belongs to official station or rank in view of God's appointment.

Of course, rulers are not always to be obeyed. "We ought to obey God rather than men." When Nebuchadnezzar gave command that the golden image which he had set up in the plain of Dura should receive universal worship, the three young Hebrews who refused to obey were justified in their disobedience; and when Darius issued a decree forbidding prayer except when addressed to himself, Daniel was right in kneeling at the open window with his face toward Jerusalem. If rulers disregard the commands of God, a Christian's duty becomes plain: the commands of God are of supreme authority always.

But here, again, we observe the interchange of responsibility—the responsibility of the ruler to God and to the people, and the responsibility of the people to God also and to the ruler. The interest is common: what is good for the one is good for the other.

III. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Then the perpetuity of government and the welfare of the people can best be secured by Christian loyalty. Christian loyalty is the expression of the law of love. When Christ announced the Golden Rule he addressed all classes. The czar of Russia is bound to consider the welfare of the rough Cossacks of the Crimea, and the rough Cossacks of the Crimea are bound to consider

the welfare of the czar. Love is the powerful constraint of noble activity—that love which suffereth long and is kind, that love which envieth not, that love “which vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil, rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” The prevalence of such a love would do away with many existing evils which threaten the peace of society. When love shall properly assert itself, arbitration will take the place of war, class-antagonisms will cease, the wants of the poor will be wisely considered, and the “new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,” will appear.

This expectation is not an idle dream. The Redeemer has promised the supremacy of love. He has given himself up to death to remove the obstacles which interfere with that supremacy. Already there is a widespread appreciation of the power of love. Love is honored. In many interests we are permitting love to assert itself. By and by every interest will come under this control as men are brought to love one another with pure hearts fervently.

The Christian who has grasped this thought should seek to give it daily expression. His obedience should be the obedience of love. He should act toward law and government as the Lord’s freeman. “Wherefore ye must needs be subject,” the apostle writes, “not only for wrath, but also for conscience’ sake.” The Christian patriot renders his allegiance through love, not through fear of punishment. He recognizes his privileges and dignities. Whatever other men may choose, he has resolved to be loyal. “The man in Christ” will be a

sober, honest, virtuous, benevolent man. A state which is entirely composed of Christ-men will be a perfect state, never mind what its form of government may be. The general prevalence of public virtue must be sought in the purity of individual lives. Whatever affects the individual lives of a community will quickly affect the entire community. Zenana-work and harem-work will gradually exert a transforming influence upon the laws and the civilization of distant lands. The manhood and womanhood of the next century are in the nurseries of to-day. The gospel always works upon this principle. Men are to be saved one by one. Individual responsibility is emphasized. The order is, a new heart, a new life, a new civilization—not a new civilization, a new life, a new heart. The gospel is an endogenous plant, growing from centre to circumference. If its distinctive law of growth is respected, the best results will be witnessed; but if there is an evident desire to assist the gospel in many ways of man's contriving, an imperfect growth is all that can be looked for. We are slow to believe this. The gospel, even among its friends, does not have a fair chance. We hamper it with appeals to legislatures and civil authorities, vainly hoping to legislate men into the kingdom of heaven or to eradicate all evil from the human heart by civil enactments. Oh that we might cordially recognize "the truth as it is in Jesus" as the power of God unto complete salvation! Oh that we might depend upon the three *onlys* of the Reformation—"the word of God only, the grace of Christ only, the work of the Spirit only"!

In a little village of Germany, where the minds of the people had been benumbed by rationalism and a dead orthodoxy, there appeared some forty years ago a young man whose soul was on fire with zeal for Christ. He

believed in one thing—redemption by the cross. Taking his place as the pastor of the village church, Louis Harms began to preach “Jesus Christ, and him crucified”—nothing else. Quickly the Sabbath became a holy day in the observance of the people; the sanctuary was thronged; a family altar was erected in every dwelling; business integrity took the place of the careless dealings hitherto known; the state began to realize a new loyalty among its citizens. As holiness entered vice disappeared. Men and women were trained as Christian missionaries. A ship was built to carry them to the islands of the South Pacific Ocean, and Herrmansburg began to bloom like the garden of the Lord. The wife of Pastor Harms touched every interest of the people: he rebuked error, encouraged righteous efforts, befriended the poor, counseled the rich, promoted temperance and established a Christian community. His simple consecration bore fruit to the glory of God. No one can now read the interesting story of his grand work without realizing that similar endeavors on the part of all of God's servants would speed the day of Christ.

And so we may turn from our consideration of the apostle's principles of government with gratitude, with sorrow and with hope—with gratitude that God has been pleased to reveal such principles for the guidance of our public affairs; with sorrow that we have been so insensible to the wisdom of their instruction and so indifferent to their practical demands; with hope that the future will witness their perfect expression in the prosperity, the peace and the happiness of a Christian state.

THIRD QUARTER.

DAVID KING OVER ALL ISRAEL.

By ABBOTT E. KITTREDGE, D.D.

July 6.—*2 Sam. 5:1-12.*

IN order to understand this lesson it will be necessary for the teacher to call the attention of the class to the historical events which are narrated in the preceding chapters, and which were so many steps in the providential plan by which David became the ruler over all Israel. Especially should two events be emphasized as the most prominent in this chain of causes—viz. the murder of Abner, the son of Ner, the captain of Saul's host, and the murder of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul and his successor on the throne of Israel. (See chs. 3 and 4.) Abner had been the strong prop of the kingdom, and with his death Ishbosheth, who was incapable of administering the government, lost heart, and the condition of affairs became more and more unsettled. When, therefore, he was murdered, the tribes of Israel, not wishing to be ruled longer by the house of Saul, and perceiving that Judah had been peaceful under David, turned to him with the petition that he should be their king. You will notice that this had been the desire of

Abner before his death, and he had urged upon the elders of the tribes allegiance to David on the ground of God's favor to him. (Read 2 Sam. 3 : 17, 18.) Abner had also had a conference with David on this matter, and had covenanted to do all in his power to bring all Israel to acknowledge the sceptre of God's anointed one (2 Sam. 3 : 20, 21).

Verses 1, 2. It was probably very soon after the death of Ishbosheth that this visit of the tribes of Israel to Hebron occurred. We are not, however, to teach that, literally, *all* the tribes went to Hebron, but only the elders, who were on this visit the representatives of the people. (See v. 3.) Now, in this request the elders urged three reasons why David should be their king. These reasons were—

1. Blood-relationship: "We are thy bone and thy flesh." It was with these words that Laban welcomed his nephew Jacob to Haran (Gen. 29 : 14); with these words also Abimelech sought the allegiance of the men of Shechem (Judg. 9 : 2).

2. David had been, under Saul, their leader in war, and as he had been a victorious leader they are ready to acknowledge him as their king.

3. He had been called of God to be a shepherd and a prince over Israel. It is true that they had been fighting against him, but now they recognize the folly of fighting against God, who had ordained that David should feed his people and rule over them. In Deut. 17 : 15 we find, among the divine laws for Israel, the first and third of these reasons stated as necessary conditions in the selection of a ruler: "Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose; one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over

thee which is not thy brother." But had the Lord ever stated this directly to David, as would seem to be implied in the words, "the Lord said unto thee"? (See also 1 Sam. 25 : 30; 2 Sam. 3 : 9, 18.) The choice of David as king over Israel was a matter of prophecy, and through Samuel God spoke to his servant, as you will see by turning to 1 Sam. 15 : 28; 16 : 1, 2. It is an interesting fact that in the words, "Thou shalt feed my people Israel," we have the first mention of a ruler under the figure of a shepherd, but after this we find this description frequently in prophecy (Ps. 78 : 71, 72; Isa. 40 : 11; Ezek. 34 : 23; 37 : 24, 25; Mic. 5 : 4; John 10 : 3, 4, 11). In his relation to Israel as a shepherd-king and an illustrious "captain" or prince, David was a type of Christ (Matt. 2 : 6), whose princely royalty was of the very throne of God, and who is the loving, strong and faithful Shepherd, guiding, feeding and keeping his chosen flock. Wicked rulers are described in the Bible as lions and wolves devouring the sheep. (See Prov. 28 : 15, 16; 22 : 27, 28; Ezek. 19 : 2-9.)

Verse 3. As the representatives of the tribes the elders come to Hebron with this petition, and a covenant is entered into "before the Lord." It was not simply an agreement whose stability rested on human promises, but it was a sacred covenant, each party taking an oath before the Lord and seeking his favor on the solemn compact. The elders promised to be loyal to their new sovereign, and David engaged to rule in accordance with the will of God. If you turn to 1 Chron. 11 : 3, you find in the account of this same anointing of David that the elders of Israel now, for the first time, publicly recognized the divine call which came to the son of Jesse through the prophet Samuel: "They anointed David king over Israel according to the word of the Lord by

Samuel ;” and this word of the Lord is recorded in 1 Sam. 16 : 1, 12. This was the third time that David had received anointing as king. The first ceremony was performed by Samuel in the home of Jesse in Bethlehem (1 Sam. 16 : 13). The second was when he was anointed king over Judah at Hebron (2 Sam. 2 : 4) immediately after the death of Saul. In regard to the ceremonies of anointing we have a record in 1 Chron. 12 : 23-40, where the number of armed men present from the different tribes is given, and also the account of the three days’ feasting and rejoicing. Notice the words with which this history closes : “For there was joy in Israel.” And when you seek for the reasons for this joy, you find four prominent reasons :

1. All the tribes of Israel were now united, and the family circle was one under David.
2. There was peace in Israel, instead of the long, bitter strife of so many years.
3. Their anointed king was he whom God had selected, so that, instead of fighting against the divine purpose, they were now in harmony with that purpose, and the smile of Jehovah rested on their union.
4. The future was bright before them. So long as they were contending with one another they had no strength to overcome the enemies of God, and the Jebusites could not be driven out of Jerusalem. But now, the tribes united, led by such a prince as David and with God on their side, they were strong to conquer all their enemies.

Verses 4, 5. On the length of David’s reign read 2 Sam. 2 : 11; 1 Kings 2 : 11; 1 Chron. 3 : 4; 29 : 27; Acts 13 : 21. His life previous to his recognition as king over Judah (1 Sam. 2 : 4) was one of strange contrasts and of mingled joy and sorrow. He was only twenty years old when he was anointed by Samuel

(1 Sam. 16 : 13), and the interval of ten years before he became king over Judah was spent as follows: four years in the service of Saul, four years a fugitive, and more than a year among the Philistines. But it was the divine will that he should be king over all Israel, and therefore that event was a certainty, though thirteen years and six months of trial and conflict intervened.

Verses 6–10. We have in these verses the following events of the deepest interest to Israel:

1. The victory over the Jebusites.
2. The capture of the citadel of Zion.
3. Jerusalem fixed as the capital of the nation.
4. The increasing prosperity of the king.
5. The grand secret of this prosperity: “The Lord God of hosts was with him.”

Let us glance at these different events:

1. *The Victory over the Jebusites.* Who were the Jebusites? *Ans.* They belonged to the great Canaanitish race, were descended from Ham (Gen. 10 : 6), and their home was in the mountain-district of Judah. They held possession of that part of Jerusalem which was in the lot of Benjamin (Josh. 18 : 28), and being securely entrenched in the “stronghold,” they kept in constant terror the inhabitants of Southern and Middle Palestine. There had been frequent attempts to dislodge this powerful enemy, but all in vain. Joshua had tried it, and he had conquered the army of the heathen allies, but he failed to seize the citadel on Mount Zion (Josh. 11 : 3–8; 15 : 63). The children of Judah had fought with the Canaanite and Perizzite and defeated them, taking Jerusalem and burning it, but they could not take the citadel within which the enemy were fortified (Judg. 1 : 4–8, 21). On account of the long residence in this part of Jerusalem of the Jebusites, it was called a strange city (Judg.

19 : 12). When David, therefore, marched with his great army against Jerusalem, the Jebusites, who had resisted so many attacks, ridiculed his purpose, sending him word that he could not take the citadel even though only the blind and the lame were placed on the walls to defend it. Some have argued that by the "blind and lame" they referred to their idol gods; but to this theory it is sufficient to say that they had too much reverence for their idols to speak of them in this manner. The suggestion that they may have placed a company of invalids upon the walls as an act of derision is not improbable. But they little knew the strength of the army that was arrayed against their city—a strength not only or chiefly in numbers, but in the favor of Almighty God. In spite of ridicule and of a stern resistance, David conquered the proud Jebusites.

2. *The Capture of the Citadel.* This citadel was on the highest of the hills which surrounded Jerusalem. These hills were Mount Zion, Mount Ophel and Mount Moriah, the first being south and south-west of the city, the last two on the north and north-east. It was a "stronghold" both in its natural position and as fortified by the skill of man. This word "stronghold" is used in three senses in the Bible. In Lam. 2 : 2, 5 and Ps. 89 : 40 it is employed to represent the strength of the people of God, which he breaks down in chastisement; in 2 Cor. 10 : 4 it represents the power of evil, which the spiritual weapons of the believer can pull down and destroy; and in Mic. 4 : 8; Nah. 1 : 7; Zech. 9 : 12 the Lord is said to be a stronghold into which the believer can flee, and where are absolute safety and peace. The capture of the citadel terminated the war, for Jerusalem was now wholly in the possession of David and the Jebusites were completely destroyed. What rejoicing there

must have been in the army of Israel as the shout of victory rose to heaven! The army of David's Lord has been encamped for centuries before the strongholds of Satan. There have been many victories from time to time, but the strongholds have not been taken. Why is this? One reason is, that the army has not been united, but denominational brigades have been fighting with each other. Another reason is, that there has been a compromising with the enemy, and in the good cheer between the two armies the glory of the King has been forgotten. Another reason is, a lack of faith, and so the fighting has been with weak hands and discouraged hearts. One fact is certain: whenever the army of the Lord is united under the banner of the Cross, and is ready to lay hold by faith on the promised almighty strength, the strongholds will be taken and the shout of triumph will rise to heaven from every part of the great battlefield.

3. *Jerusalem Fixed as the Capital of the Nation.* "So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David." It will be interesting to call the attention of the scholars to the love of the ancient people of God for Jerusalem, and to the prophecies of their return to that city when the time shall come for God to favor Zion. (Read Ps. 51:18; 122:3, 6; 147:2; 125:2; 137:6; Joel 3:1, 2, 20; Zech. 1:17; 2:12; 8:3.)

4. *The Increasing Prosperity of the King.* His first step was to rebuild the city, beginning at the citadel, within whose walls was his palace. The word "Millo" in the ninth verse signifies "fullness," and the reference is to the bastion or fortified tower of the citadel (1 Chron. 11:8). It was a necessity that this Millo be fortified, for in its fortifications the city was strong. So we read of Solomon building up Millo (1 Kings 9:15, 24; 11:27). When Sennacherib came with his great army to attack

Jerusalem, the first act of Hezekiah was to repair and fortify Millo (2 Chron. 32 : 5). Christ is our "Millo." We must build up our doctrinal belief and our spiritual life around *him*, and then no enemy can prevail against us. David not only built up the ruins of Jerusalem and made the city beautiful and strong, but he grew in power and in favor with the people. His people loved him and his enemies feared him.

5. *The Grand Secret of this Prosperity.* "The Lord God of hosts was with him." There is no true prosperity without the blessing of God, and there can be no true greatness except by the help of God. "I will make thy name great" was the divine promise to Abraham (Gen. 12 : 2). Joseph was very great in the land of Egypt, because the Lord was with him. In 1 Chron. 29 : 12 we read, "In thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." (Read also 2 Sam. 7 : 9.)

In regard to the meaning of the eighth verse, on which opinions differ widely, I will only give you the view of Ewald: "Every one who conquers the Jebusites, let him cast down the precipice both the lame and the blind," etc. By the words, "the blind and the lame shall not come into the house," we may understand that they were to hold no intercourse with the Jebusites nor permit them to enter the temple.

Verse 11. In 1 Kings 5 : 1 we read of the friendship of Hiram, king of Tyre, for David, and so we may conclude that the two sovereigns were on intimate terms. When David, therefore, desired to build a palace for himself, he naturally sought assistance from Hiram, not only on account of the cedar trees in his kingdom, but because there were experienced workmen in Tyre. In the building of this palace David indicated his confidence in the permanency of his kingdom.

Verse 12. There are two profound thoughts in this closing verse:

1. The recognition by David of the hand of God in his position as king over Israel.
2. The recognition of the truth that the purpose of this providence was for the temporal and spiritual interests of the people of God. The people are not created for the king, but the king for the people (1 Kings 10:9; 2 Chron. 2:11; Esth. 4:14; Isa. 1:25-27; Dan. 2:30).

There are two thrilling pictures in this lesson, and they bring home two practical and thrilling truths to the hearts of God's people:

1. *The Jebusite in Possession of the Stronghold of Zion.* Israel had gained many victories over the inhabitants of Canaan, but they had been unable to drive out the Jebusite from the stronghold. So the Christian Church has gained many victories—her history for eighteen hundred years is one of successive triumphs—but the Jebusite has not yet been driven from the stronghold. What is this spiritual Jebusite? It is the spirit of worldliness, love of the world as opposed to love of God. Paul writes to the church at Corinth: "The god of *this* world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." And this worldliness is the mightiest in the very centres of Christian civilization; it is firmly entrenched in social laws and customs and in the passions of the people. It is the giant foe to Christianity; it is sapping principle, destroying the beauty of our youth, polluting the purest love of home, and blinding the eye of the soul to God and heaven and immortality. The capture of this stronghold will be the dawn of the millennium.

2. *The Taking the Stronghold by David.* The Jebusites laughed in derision as the army of Israel marched up to

the rocky citadel, and a godless world are always flinging their derisive laughter at the Church. But the time came when the Jebusites ceased to laugh as the troops of David poured over the battlements and conquered the enemy, and raised the standard of Jehovah over even the stronghold in Zion. What was the secret of this great victory?

1. The tribes were all united on the side of God.
- 2: They were all united under David as the divinely-appointed king.

The Church must become a unit in love and zeal and separation from the world, and she must become a unit under Christ, the anointed Messianic King. It is not enough to trust in him as a Saviour, not enough to sing of his beauty and praise his grace. He must REIGN as King over every heart, the supreme Monarch of the soul, and then, when the Church is one army of willing, obedient subjects, Jesus will lead such an army to the final battle and to the long-expected universal victory.

God is ready, Christ is ready, the Holy Spirit is ready, but is the Church ready to capture the stronghold in Zion?

THE ARK IN THE HOUSE.

BY THE REV. ARTHUR MITCHELL, D. D.

July 13.—2 Sam. 6:1-12.

IN this lesson there are sharp contrasts. Here is the ark of God, dreaded by some, by others desired; by some treated with rashness and irreverence, by others with holy care. To the first it becomes the occasion of awful punishment and fear; to the last, of unmixed blessing. Like the gospel, it is a savor of death to some; to others, of life.

I. David, now victorious over all enemies, and firmly settled on the throne, resolves to bring up the long-neglected ark of God from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem. Disregarded, almost forgotten, through the reigns of Saul and Ishbosheth, it shall now be honored in the sight of all the nation, brought to the capital, and made again the centre of Israel's religious services.

Immense preparations are made by the king for celebrating its removal with suitable impressiveness and splendor. The whole nation is, as it were, taken into his plans. The men of renown, the leaders of the tribes, are summoned from all portions of the land. The priests and Levites assemble from their widely-scattered cities. "So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the

ark of God from Kirjath-jearim" (1 Chron. 13:5). Thirty thousand chosen men of Israel formed its escort, and spectators innumerable thronged the roads.

Kirjath-jearim is reached; the vast procession is formed, the ark in its midst. It is drawn in a new cart by oxen, and Uzzah and Ahio, the two sons of Abinadab, Levites, accustomed for years to the charge, have it under their special care. Before it is the king himself, surrounded by bands of minstrels, with players upon timbrels and harps and trumpets filling the air far and near with their loud and joyful strains. Suddenly, as in an instant, the music ceases. All around the ark the procession is broken. A cry of terror is heard, and now another, and still another. Disorder and confusion are spreading from rank to rank. David himself is seen lifting up his hands in horror as at some dreadful sight. In every direction the sounds of wailing and fear are rising from the multitude.

What is the cause of this sudden tumult? Uzzah has been struck dead beside the ark! It shook because of the stumbling oxen, and, reaching forth his hand to hold it, instantly he fell dead upon the road. What could have been the meaning of this startling catastrophe? Undoubtedly, to many readers of the Bible, it has appeared a judgment of strange and disproportionate severity. Without explanation it wears a look of absolute cruelty. If, however, we study the whole event, we shall find that there are circumstances which will do much to explain why Jehovah regarded this dreadful stroke as just and necessary.

The king and the people were engaged in honoring the ark of God. So far, well. But they who knew it to be deserving of such honor as these vast and impressive services implied should have known also that it was to be

honored in the way *appointed by God*. They should not have violated, even though it were in the name of worship, his express commands. Yet such violation Uzzah was guilty of, and David, with all Israel, was implicated in his sin.

But before we can fully appreciate the command which Israel violated that day we must notice the place which the ark held in the history and worship of Israel. It was the central and most sacred of all those symbols which God employed of old for the religious instruction of his people. The ark was the express emblem of Jehovah's presence, the shrine which contained his law, the symbol of his mercy through Christ's atoning sacrifice. Everything connected with it, every ordinance concerning its treatment, was designed to intensify a sense of its holiness and to make it more impressive as an object-lesson in the central truths of religion. Within it were deposited the two tables of stone on which God had himself written his holy commandments. Covering these was the lid of solid gold—the mercy-seat, as it was named—on which rested the luminous Shekinah, that mysterious and sacred cloud from which was heard the voice of God when he communed with Moses from the mercy-seat. Above the ark were the cherubim, angelic forms gazing down reverently upon the sacred resting-place of the law, now *covered* with the blood-besprinkled mercy-seat in token of Christ's peace-speaking sacrifice; for upon this golden covering was sprinkled every year the blood of the atoning sacrifices, types of that Lamb of God who should take away the sin of the world.

As a memorial of God's abounding mercies also there was preserved either within or immediately beside the ark a golden pot filled with the manna which for forty

years had been rained from heaven to satisfy all the millions of Israel. There was also seen the rod of Aaron, which had blossomed miraculously to silence the envious murmurers who would contest his authority. The presence of this in connection with the holiest memorials of the sanctuary was itself an evident token of the sacredness of the Aaronic priesthood, and also—which is a point specially important in this lesson—of all those observances appointed by God in their priestly duties.

The *history* of the ark also was such as to heighten in the mind of every devout Israelite a sense of its sacredness, to make it a more impressive emblem of Jehovah's presence. At its approach the waters of Jordan had divided, and, as if in homage before it, the waves had shrunk back and its swollen current was stayed. Before it the lofty walls of Jericho had fallen in ruins. When the Philistines had borne it off with unholy hands the idols of stone fell on their faces in its presence, and were found in the morning by their awestruck worshipers lying in fragments on their temple floor. Wherever it had been borne by its terrified captors disease and plagues had smitten them, until the very heathen had "given glory to the God of Israel," and had sent back his holy shrine accompanied with atoning offerings. That he might teach Israel to revere his own holiness through the holiness of his chosen ark, Jehovah assigned it the inmost place within the tabernacle; within the Holy of Holies it was to rest. Not even into the outer court of the tabernacle could the people enter; into the Holy Place the priests only were admitted; while into the Holy of Holies, beyond the veil, the resting-place of the ark, none but the high priest could enter, and he only once in the year—not without the blood of sacrifice—when he came to make atonement for the sins of the people.

It was a part of this same lesson of reverence for his name and presence, and only in harmony with all the wonderful history of the ark, when Jehovah added special instructions as to the manner in which it should be cared for by its attendants, and in which the tabernacle and the ark itself should be transported from place to place. The Levites only were to be employed in this service (Num. 4:2, 15; 1 Chron. 15:2), and of these only one household, the sons of Kohath. Nor were even they to resort to such means for its transportion as were used for carrying the various parts of the tabernacle and its other furniture. These, it was expressly said, might be borne in wagons and drawn by oxen, and Moses accordingly provided them; but the ark was to be reverently borne upon the shoulders of the priests, and was to be carried in no other way (Num. 7:1-9; Deut. 10:8; 31:9; 1 Chron. 15:15.) Moreover, even they were not to lay hands upon the ark itself (Num. 4:15). At its corners were rings of gold, just below the crown of gold which encircled it; for these rings golden staves were provided, and by them the ark was to be borne (Ex. 25:12-15).

This is not the occasion to attempt a full inquiry into the significance of all these regulations; we have already seen in part their meaning. But there was no room for doubt that these directions had been thought by Jehovah of sufficient importance to be embodied in distinct and written commands; and these commands on that day were utterly disregarded. When, a few years before, the terrified Philistines had sent the ark back from its captivity to Beth-shemesh, they, in obedience to their diviners, had employed a new cart for the purpose; they knew no better. But exactly this Israel had been forbidden to do. They entirely disregarded, however, the word

of God, seeming to think that if they did but carry up the ark to Jerusalem, it would be all well enough—that God should feel himself sufficiently honored, though it were done in some way of their own and even after the manner of the heathen. If the ark had been transported on the shoulders of the priests, as God had enjoined, it would not have been in danger from the stumbling oxen. One act of disobedience led to another, until their carelessness and irreverence seem to have culminated in Uzzah's laying hold of the ark itself, an act which was forbidden to the priests—and Uzzah was no priest—under any circumstances. It was at this point that Jehovah interposed. The nation, with the king at their head, were nominally honoring him, but by the light and irreverent way in which they did it, by the negligent and half-heathenish manner in which, notwithstanding all their pomp, they entered upon this sacred business, they were dishonoring him. If God were worthy of their worship, why did they take no sufficient pains to worship him according to his word? How did they dare in the very acts of his so-called service to break his most obvious command?

As for Uzzah himself, who was the most conspicuous sufferer, it is possible that long familiarity with the ark had bred a special irreverence and presumption in him; but, however that may be, his sin was shared by all who employed him in these forbidden services, and so occasioned his foolhardy and guilty deed.

A feeling of mingled anger and despair now took possession of David's mind (v. 8). If he had been "displeased" with himself, we could have understood it. But it is indeed a mystery if his resentment was directed against God. It inclines us to fear that his own glory was in some measure his object in all these magnificent

services. Was he angry because God had turned his great fête into a day of national disappointment and gloom, or because Jehovah had dishonored him before the multitudes by this overwhelming rebuke? We cannot tell, but we wish that it could have been written that David was humbled and penitent rather than that he was displeased.

And we can defend his despondency as little as his anger. He seems to have forgotten all his duty in a fit of half sullenness, half unbelieving fear. He abandons on the spot the whole plan of restoring the ark to its true abode. Instead of inquiring for the *sin* which caused the trouble, he acts as if there were no hope of forgiveness, no hope of acceptable service—as though God were a being too dreadful to be approached, too capricious to be pleased. He drops the ark at the first refuge which can be found for it, apparently anxious to be quit altogether and as soon as possible of an unwelcome and dreaded presence. This spirit seems too much like that of the Philistines on a precisely similar occasion, when they exclaimed in terror, “They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to slay us,” and immediately clamored that it be sent away (1 Sam. 5 : 7, 10). We are reminded of the slavish fears which the presence of God and the thought of his holy majesty still awaken in the hearts of sinful men, and of their readiness to be quit of all tokens of Him whom they cannot remember except with dread. Everything connected with the course of David on that day, his careless disregard of God’s command at its beginning and his anger and despair at its close, points to the conclusion that although he had made most elaborate *outward* preparations for its celebration, he had not duly prepared his heart for employments so holy as these.

II. But now there appears another character upon the scene. He is a man hitherto unknown. The name of Obed-edom will always be honored as that of the man who, while all others were filled with terror and dismay, shrinking in dread from the ark of God, held in his bosom the secret of a far different feeling—looking upon the ark indeed with all veneration, but without fear, opening the doors of his dwelling to welcome it, and finding it a source of unmixed good.

He knew well how fearfully God had vindicated his holiness when the ark had been dishonored; how by an unseen hand the massive idols had been thrown down upon their faces and broken before it; how the Philistines had been smitten with disease and slaughter; how the men of Beth-shemesh had been slain, and how Uzzah also had been struck with death beside it. He had heard the cry of terror from its heathen captors when they plead to have it sent away from their coasts. Beth-shemesh, the scene of the awful judgment because of the dishonored ark, was scarcely a half-day's journey from his home, and now he sees all the frightened thousands of Israel, helpless with sudden fear, crowding the mountain-roads around his dwelling, even David himself afraid to meddle with this dreadful ark. He sees all this, and yet he does not fear to admit it to his house. A man humble and devout, he understands that, although to the irreverent and careless our God is a consuming fire, the obedient need not fear him. To the obedient and confiding soul he is always a God of love. Obed-edom expected to *obey* God—to obey him scrupulously, reverently. Whatever rule God had prescribed for his observance he would never make bold to call a little thing. He was not under any such delusion as that God could be better honored by a vast procession or by any services, how-

ever ravishing to human sense, than by a sober respect for his plain commands.

David had planned that day to worship God grandly, but he did not worship in God's appointed way (1 Chron. 15 : 13). The pageant he called forth he meant should be worthy of his royal opulence and taste, but humble reverence would have made it more worthy of Jehovah's holiness. This he forgot, and so his day of splendor ended in disaster and terror and rebuke. His thirty thousand chosen men in their glittering array, the leaders of all Israel, the royal household, the sacred choirs with their resounding strains, the numberless thousands thronging to the sight of this bannered host,—all these filled the mountain-passes and the hillsides of Judah that day with magnificence and life; yet see the evening lesson: God is better pleased with the confiding obedience of one poor man's home than with all this. The royal pavilion which David had made ready for the ark on Zion, Jehovah would not visit. He chose for his resting-place instead the obscure dwelling in this mountain-village, where, although there was no pomp, there were obedient hearts prepared to bow before him.

Those who waited that evening on the hilltops about Jerusalem for the first strains of the approaching music heard instead the distant wailing which told of some strange grief. Instead of the mighty host whose banners they had looked to see coming up over the western hills against the evening sky, they saw a broken and hurrying multitude. Soon they learn from the first fugitives the dreadful story. Some are scoffing at the Jehovah who, as they say, thus smites his own worshipers; others are heavy with fear. At last the king himself is seen, riding silent and gloomy through the gates. Night falls on the frightened or scoffing multitudes, on the empty tabernacle, on the dejected king.

Meantime, in the house of Obed-edom there is only peace. It rests not alone on the father. Here God's covenant is found to be a household covenant and to bring a blessing to all the home.

And they were such as to be *manifest*. They were not confined to the secret souls of this favored household. Either their unusual health and happiness and prosperity were such as were daily apparent to all their neighbors, or the inward blessings they enjoyed were freely mentioned by them to Jehovah's praise. Probably in both these ways the favor they received from God was known.

And now we shall see that by having received a blessing they were made a blessing. The happiness and goodness of this one pious household extend their influence at length to all the nation. They make it evident to one and another of the multitudes who had fled from God at his stroke that, although he is a holy God, he need not be dreaded by any humble, careful heart. Through the spreading story of Obed-edom's blessing all Israel learns anew the loving-kindness of the Lord. The skepticism which that day of gloom had rolled over the land begins to be dispelled. The scoffers are silenced, the disheartened take courage. They learn that although the highest kings must not trifle with the holiness of the Lord, the humblest worshiper, anxious only to obey completely his sacred will, shall find him a Father full of smiles and tenderness. Obed-edom restores David's faith, and David at length leads the nation back to God. It is given to this unknown villager to instruct and reassure the dejected king. From the acceptance of Obed-edom's lowly worship, contrasted with the rejection of his own magnificent array, the monarch learns that to *obey* is better than sacrifice—that not all the architecture of David's royal house, not all the eloquence of David's psalms, not

ail the minstrelsy of his choirs, not all the throngs of Israel's applauding tribes, could please Jehovah half so well as a serious and exact obedience to his written word.

And David is not only made more reverent; his faith is quickened and restored. He sees that God's worship may still be made a fountain of blessing to his people. He therefore summons Israel again to bring up the ark to Zion. And how differently does he conduct the matter now! Read it in the fifteenth chapter of First Chronicles: "Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God and to minister unto him for ever." And even these he bids to sanctify themselves for the holy service: "Sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel, . . . for because ye did it not at the first the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order. . . . And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded, according to the word of the Lord. And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers, with instruments of music, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding by lifting up the voice *with joy*. . . . So David and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-edom *with joy*."

Upon this worship there fell only Jehovah's blessing, for it wore the beauty of *holiness*. "Then, on that day," the Scripture reads, "David delivered first this psalm into the hands of Asaph and his brethren: Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, . . . worship the Lord *in the beauty of holiness*."

GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID.

BY THE REV. JAMES B. SHAW, D. D.

July 20.—2 Sam. 7:1-16.

THIS narrative is an interesting illustration of the truth that God will honor the man who seeks to honor him. David wanted to build a house for the Lord, and he was moved to it, we have reason to believe, by the highest considerations. It was not to add another glory to his reign; it was not to establish more firmly his throne: it was the grateful heart of the son of Jesse which prompted him to do this thing. How could he live in a house of cedar while the God who had done so much for him and for his people still dwelt in the tabernacle? So he determined that he would build a house for the Lord, and as far as possible make it worthy of him. But David, because he had been a man of war, was not permitted to carry out the high resolve. The house of the Lord must be built in peaceful times. The corner-stone must be laid by a hand that never had been stained with blood.

But while the Lord did not allow David to build the house, he permitted him to make all the necessary preparations for it. He was permitted to gather the materials and provide the gold and the silver. And this preparatory work, dear friends, does not stand as high with us as it should. It is the man who reaps the harvest, who brings the sheaves to the garner, who gets all the honor, while the man who did the still harder work of clearing

the land and preparing the soil for the seed is scarcely thought of. Perhaps you would like to hear what David himself said about this preparatory work—this work so essential that the temple, at least in that day, never could have been built without it : “ Furthermore, David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, is yet young and tender, and the work is great ; for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God.” Then, after enumerating the various things which he had provided, he goes on to say : “ Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of my own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the house withal. And who, then, is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord ? ” Everything, you perceive, was of the very best, and everything was in abundance, according to the measure of David’s mighty heart. Was there ever a more unselfish work than this ? When Solomon reached the throne he found all the materials and the hoarded gold and silver waiting to take their places in that sublime edifice which was to be the glory of the earth.

Perhaps just here it might be well to remind ourselves that our gracious Master put a far higher value on this preparatory work than we are accustomed to do. He placed John the Baptist above all the prophets, above all who had gone before him, and yet John’s work from first to last was a preparatory one. After he had gone to his rest and reward, if any one had asked, What did John do while he dwelt among us ? the only answer could have been, He prepared the way of the Lord ; he made his

path straight before him. That was his mission, that was his life-work, and yet it was that mission and that short life-work which lifted him to as high a place as man had ever reached before.

Then, again, while David was not allowed to build the house of the Lord, he was called to do a still greater work for the Church. David was to write the songs of the sanctuary, and the Lord of hosts, it would seem, had been fitting him for this greater work from his childhood up: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel. And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the names of the great men that are on the earth." It is a fact to which our attention has been called by one of England's greatest preachers that the life of David is constantly cropping out in the psalms—that they are so woven together and so essential to each other that we never could have had the psalms but for the life. And through what an experience that man had to pass for our sakes! He must endure all the perils and hardships of a shepherd's life—the fierce heat of the day and the chilling wind of the night, the spring flood, the summer drouth; he must encounter the lion and the bear, and look death in the face at every turn; a price must be set on his head; he must be hunted from one hiding-place to another; he must be brought lower than man ever was before, and then suddenly exalted to a throne; and all that we might have the psalms—those psalms which fit into every crevice of the human heart, which meet every emergency of this sublunary life! When our own words fail us, when the grandest hymns and anthems of the Church cannot meet the emergency of

our case; when even the other parts of Scripture are hardly up to the measure of our wants,—we turn to the psalms, and there find just the thing that we need. Here are the loftiest notes that ever carried a soul within hearing-distance of the heavenly world, and here strains so sad that they seem like echoed wails from the spirits in prison. And in reading and chanting the vesper psalm we should bear in mind also that the sweet singer of Israel was under the inspiration of God. His are divine songs in the truest sense of the word. And they can never wear out; the Church can never outgrow them. We march to their music. In the morning we strike our tents, and in the evening pitch them again, with one of the songs of David.

Now, I have spoken of this contribution to the worship of Jehovah as a more important work than the one on which David had set his heart—as a more important work than to build the house of the Lord. Has not the result made the statement good? Where is the magnificent house which Solomon built, and where is the Shekinah, the terrestrial throne of Jehovah? And where is the house built at such a fabulous cost that took its place? Not one stone is left standing on another. But the psalms are still ours; the sacred songs of David are still a part of our spiritual patrimony. We are marching still to the inspired and inspiring music. They are growing daily dearer to us, like the water from the rock which grew the sweeter the longer it flowed.

And we must not forget that this was a work which Solomon, with all his great gifts, could never have done. He had no experience to make the psalms of. Born in a palace, rocked in an ivory cradle, with scarcely a disaster his whole life through, the man for whom God had done more than for any other man that ever came into

the world, how could he have written those sacred songs which have kept so many feet from falling, so many hearts from breaking?

But David's covenant God was so well pleased with that which he had it in his heart to do that he went one step farther. If David might not build the house of the Lord, his son might do it in his stead. And this, I think, is just what David would have chosen for himself. If it had been left for the king of Israel to decide, I think he would have said, "Let my son build the house; let him have all the glory of it; let it evermore be associated with his name." We cannot doubt that this is what such a man as the sweet singer of Israel was would have chosen. We live in our children. We rise up early, we sit up late, we eat the bread of sorrow, we wear ourselves out prematurely, we reach the grave before it is ready for us, and all that it may be better for our children after we are gone. And yet, strong and tenacious as our affections are, there have been but few men among us who could love as David the king did. He was the man who left his throne, and fasted and wept and lay all night on the earth, and refused to be comforted, because the life of his little child was hanging by a thread. He was the man who uttered the bitterest cry save one that ever came from a breaking heart: "O my son Absalom! my son! my son! would God that I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son! my son!" The honor of the son is the honor of the father multiplied a hundred-fold. At all events, so it is with every man who can love as David did.

There is another thought to which I must just allude before I reach the climax. Because this work was not hurried on, because it was delayed, no one was robbed, no

one was oppressed, no one was oppressively taxed. The bed of the poor man was not sold from under him to build the house of the Lord; the stones were not cemented together with tears and blood, and when the majestic edifice was dedicated no curses mingled with the alleluias. And that, no doubt, was one reason why the work was thus delayed, our heavenly Father is so considerate for the poor. And yet the building of that house in the way in which it was done was the best thing up to that time that Israel ever did for the poor. Next to God himself, the poor and needy, the widow and the fatherless, have no such friend as God's house. Building a church in any place makes it sure that the sick will have a hospital, and the orphan a home, and the dead a burial-place where they may sleep in peace. From beneath the sanctuary flow those streams which carry health and life whithersoever they may go.

Now we have reached the climax. David's covenant God went far beyond his thoughts, far beyond his highest aspirations, and gave him that which David would never have ventured to ask for. He promised to establish his throne for ever: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee which shall proceed out of thy bowels. And I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his Father and he shall be my son." Look heavenward, dear friend, and see how wonderfully this promise has been fulfilled. The Son of David is now at the right hand of the Majesty on high; the Son of David is now seated on that throne which has a rainbow round about it, and all power in heaven and on earth has been committed to his hands. Before him

angels and archangels bow; before him cherubim and seraphim cover their faces with their wings; before him the heavenly powers bend in lowliest adoration, while patriarchs and prophets and apostles and martyrs, and the saints made perfect, lay down all their honors at his feet. "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!"

O man! can you withhold your homage? You owe him as much as any one of that great multitude, and can you withhold your homage? Go once more to Bethlehem, once more to Gethsemane, once more to the judgment-hall, once more to Calvary, once more to the sepulchre in the garden, and then let it be your greatest grief that you have but one heart to love him, but one tongue to praise him, but one life to serve him.

KINDNESS TO JONATHAN'S SON.

BY THE REV. A. W. PITZER, D. D.

July 27.—2 Sam. 9:1-13.

THE posture of Israel in the history of nations is absolutely unique. From the call of Abram to its present marvelous condition, through all the eras of its strange and eventful career, this people have dwelt alone and have not been reckoned among the nations. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel; for the Lord's portion was his people, Jacob the lot of his inheritance; the eternal God was his refuge, and underneath him were the everlasting arms.

That God who called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees, and promised to be a God to him and his seed after him, was always faithful to his covenant, and always present to deliver and defend his chosen children.

It is impossible, therefore, to comprehend the Scriptures of the Old Testament or the history of Israel without fully recognizing and estimating the presence of the living and personal God, and his intimate and peculiar relation to them, as factors in the entire history of this remarkable people.

The attempt to explain Israel's career and destiny on any principle of mere naturalism is thoroughly unscien-

tific, in that such attempt wholly ignores the most palpable and potent element in the problem—namely, the fact of an ever-present and ceaselessly active God. To eliminate this factor is to void the Scriptures of significance and the history of life. If the records do not establish the fact of a present and acting God as one of the factors in Israel's career, then they utterly fail to establish anything whatever.

During the period of the Wandering, from the call of Abram to the death of Moses, and during the period of Possession, from the Conquest to the Captivity, God interposed almost continuously in behalf of Abraham's seed, his covenant clients, his chosen inheritance. By angels and theophanies, by voices and visions, by signs and wonders, by fire and flood, by thunder and lightning, by opened heavens and stayed sun and moon, he revealed himself to Israel and the race as a God of might and a God of mercy. By divine words and acts he made known his purposes of love and grace to lost and guilty men. Moses was his representative and acted for him; Joshua was his chosen captain to conquer the Promised Land; the judges were his deliverers to represent him as interposing in behalf of his penitent people; the kings of Israel were his kings to govern the nation for him: behind the human was the divine King, and Saul and David and Solomon were not kings in their own name or power or right, but Jehovah's kings, in his name and power and right to represent and rule for him.

During the judgeship of the upright Samuel the people, grown weary of God and wishing to be like the nations around them, asked him to give them a king; and he, having referred the matter to God, was directed to grant their request. God's choice of a king, confirmed by the voice of the people, fell upon Saul, the son

of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, a young man of kingly presence, undoubted courage, brilliant gifts and signal ability, but self-willed and selfish, and sadly lacking in steadfastness and rectitude.

It was soon apparent that King Saul failed to appreciate his high position or his peculiar relations to Israel and Israel's God. He made his own will, not the will of God, his rule of conduct, and thus proved unworthy of the theocratic throne. His willful disobedience to the divine command in sparing Agag and the best of the spoils of the Amalekites was swiftly followed by the decree of his dethronement, and his high position must soon be vacated for a nobler and more obedient man. Rejected of the Lord and abandoned by the Spirit, Saul grew more cruel, selfish and revengeful; his pathway became darker and more desolate, and he descended with fearful momentum and rapidity into the lowest depths of murderous malignity and God-defying impiety. Knowing that David, the heroic champion of Israel and victor of the Philistines, was the anointed of God, and that the Lord was with him, the jealous and malignant king sought time and again to kill him.

It was at such a time as this that Jonathan, Saul's son and the heir-apparent to the throne, made with Jesse's son, whom he loved as his own life, the covenant of a deathless friendship. Jonathan said to David, "The Lord be with thee, and thou shalt not only while yet I live show me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not, but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever; no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, and Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul."

The kingdom moved rapidly forward to its divinely-ordained crisis. On Mount Gilboa, Israel was smitten and routed by their old enemies the Philistines ; Saul's three sons were slain, and the defeated and desperate king died by his own hand. Over their graves David uttered this pathetic lamentation : "The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places ; how are the mighty fallen ! . . . From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided ; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. . . . I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan ; very pleasant hast thou been unto me ; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of woman " (2 Sam. i : 19-27).

From this time onward the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker, but David waxed stronger and stronger. Crowned king by Judah at Hebron, at the end of seven years and six months David received the kingdom from the other tribes, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-and-three years over all Israel and Judah.

After the Lord had given him rest from all enemies he appeared unto him, and renewed and enlarged the covenant made nine hundred years before with his great forefather Abraham, promising to him a Son whose throne should be established for ever and ever.

This covenant doubtless recalled to the mind of this generous and noble-hearted man the covenant made in other and dark days with his dear friend Jonathan, now no more, but a covenant that expressly stipulated that David's kindness to Jonathan should outlast his life, and after his death extend to his house : "Thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever." In answer to

King David's question, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" Ziba, an old servant, informed him that Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, lame in both feet, was in the house of Machir in Lo-debar of Gilead. And David made haste to send for him, and when he came, said, "Fear not; for I will surely show kindness to thee for Jonathan thy father's sake, and I will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father, and thou shalt eat bread continuously at my table." And the lame son of the princely Jonathan was adopted into the family of the king, his father's friend.

Let us gather up some of the precious truths of the text.

I. *The Unselfish Kindness of David.*—The devil's sneering question, "Doth Job serve God for naught?" has been repeated by his servants and subjects in every age. It is true that many of the kindnesses shown by man to his fellow-man have no nobler source than human selfishness. Alas! too often we do good to others hoping to receive as much again. It is Christ-like to love one's enemies, to do good and lend, hoping for nothing again: then indeed are we the children of the Highest, who is kind unto the unthankful and the evil.

To send across the Jordan to Lo-debar to find a young man whom he perhaps had never seen, the grandson of Saul, who had so often sought to slay him, and whose house was a rival one in the kingdom—a young man crippled in both feet, with no prospect of being useful to the king—to alienate from the crown the forfeited estates of the house of Saul and restore them to crippled Mephibosheth—affords beautiful evidence of the unselfish kindness of David's generous heart. And this exhibi-

tion of kindness is the more glorious when we remember that David is no longer a young man; and generally age does not soften but hardens the heart. In how many cases does the generous kindness of youth give place to the worldly selfishness of old age! Apart from the influences of the gospel, the old have, and manifest, far less kindness of heart than the young. David's wonderful exaltation from the sheepfold to the kingdom had a natural tendency to repress or stifle the kindlier impulses of his heart. How many are there who in times of prosperity utterly forget the friends of former and adverse days! To seek out the lame, the halt, the blind, the poor, the wretched, to minister unto others, not to be ministered unto, is the beauty and the glory of the Christian life.

II. David's kindness to the son was not only unselfish, it was also according to the covenant with his father. Twenty-two years before, David, fearing the wrath of Saul, made a covenant of friendship with Prince Jonathan, and then fled from the court. That covenant was a holy thing; it sacredly bound both David and Jonathan in life, and even after death: "Thou shalt not only while I yet live show me the kindness of the Lord, but thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever."

All covenants, agreements, contracts, bargains, constitutions, except those sinful in themselves, should be most faithfully observed by all the parties who enact or ratify them. One of the characteristics of the man who shall abide in the tabernacle of the Lord and dwell in his holy hill is that he sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not. Fidelity to covenant engagements, whether in daily labor, the mechanic's shop, the marts of busi-

ness, the learned professions, whether in pulpit or pew, is one of the very highest virtues of mankind. Be true to your word at the loss of property or even of life itself. Nor does lapse of time or change of circumstances absolve any one from covenant obligations. The vow of friendship made in the hour of direst extremity binds with all the authority of God in the sunniest moment of abounding prosperity. The true soul will never forget the timely loan when the firm was ready to fail, nor the barrel of flour when the larder was empty, nor the ton of coal when the fire was gone, nor the cheerful visit when many held aloof, nor the heroic watch during infectious disease, nor the silent sympathy when death entered the home. "Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not."

More than twenty years had passed since Jonathan's kindness to David, and how wonderfully changed were all his circumstances! But the kindness and covenant of those dark days he could not forget, and, king though he was, he hastened to show the kindness of God to the lame son of his former friend.

III. David's kindness was not only unselfish and according to covenant; it was the kindness of God. "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God unto him?" Referring to the covenant, we find that Jonathan made David swear that he would show the kindness of the Lord to him and his house.

Even the tender mercies of man are cruel. True and unselfish kindness of man to man must have its origin in God—kindness that flows into the human soul from God, and is akin to the kindness of his great and loving heart. Show me not man's kindness, but the kindness of God.

Alas ! there is but little real kindness in the natural heart of man. Out of the heart of man, said the great Teacher, proceed evil thoughts ; and the divine description of the natural man is, " filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, maliciousness, envy, murder, malignity, hatred of God, proud, without natural affection, implacable and unmerciful." The natural condition of the human race is one of hatred, strife, war and destruction. In all lands and in every generation brother's blood, shed by man's hands, has cried to the great God for vengeance. War upon the weak, the aged, the helpless, the infirm, the poor, the lame, has been the rule, not the exception, in all human history. To ask, therefore, for the kindness of man would have been to demand a valueless blessing.

We hear much in these days of the enthusiasm of humanity and the brotherhood of man ; but whence comes this enthusiasm, and who first taught this brotherhood of man ? The so-called " natural religions " never inspired in man any love for humanity, and the Christless teachers of the race never proclaimed the brotherhood of man. It is simple historic verity to assert that apart from Christ and his religion there has never been any true and lasting humanitarianism on the earth. Female child-murder, widow-burnings, bloody persecutions, human sacrifices, have been, and are to this day, the accepted tenets and practices of the " natural religions " that know not the Lord Jesus Christ. Buddhism, Hindooism, fetichism and infidelity have erected no homes for the aged and infirm, no asylums for orphans, no hospitals for the insane, the sick, the afflicted. Not until the heart has felt the kindness of God is there any true enthusiasm of humanity or any proper recognition of the brotherhood of man.

David had felt in his own soul something of the great

and wondrous kindness of God, and this kindness he will show to Jonathan's crippled son.

IV. The kindness shown was for the sake of another—kindness to the son for the father's sake.

How many since David have shown kindness to the children of the old and tried friends of former days for the parents' sake? Years ago you had a dear friend who stood by you in the darkest hour of your sorest trial, and now he is no more; but his children remain, and how deeply concerned are you in their welfare and happiness? how ready are you to aid them in every possible way, to share in their joys and sympathize in their sorrows, and by word and deed to show the kindness of God to the children for the father's sake? The child of an old friend is far nearer to us all than the child of the stranger.

Kindness to the children for the father's sake is the principle and method of God's dealings with men. Three times in the fundamental law in the Pentateuch is it stated that God keeps and bestows his mercy unto a thousand generations of them that love him and keep his commands. Time and again is it stated that his wondrous and abounding mercies to the children of Israel were not because of any goodness or merit in them, but for the sake of Abraham their father, and because of God's covenant with him.

When David's son Solomon was old and his heart was turned from his God, and he fell into idolatry, and the Lord was angry with him and determined to rend the kingdom from him, he nevertheless adds, with pathetic tenderness, "In thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake." Nor was this all, for he most kindly and graciously adds, "I will not rend away all the kingdom,

but will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen." For David's sake the kingdom was not taken from Solomon, and for David's sake Rehoboam, Solomon's son, was allowed to retain the kingdom of Judah when ten tribes were rent away and given to Jeroboam. The kindness of God is shown to both Solomon and his son for the sake of another.

If the unseen spiritual history of souls could be laid bare to mortal gaze, it would be seen that thousands and tens of thousands of the most active and useful Christians of every age of the Church were saved in virtue of covenanted mercy and pious ancestors. Of many it may be said, as of Timothy, "The unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice." God has shown his marvelous kindness to many wayward and wicked children for the sake of sainted father or mother—saved, in the infinite mercy of God, by his kindness for another's sake. God's covenant of love with the parent abides in all the fullness of divine blessing for children and children's children, even unto a thousand generations of such as love him and keep his covenant and commandments.

The kindness of God shown by David to Mephibosheth for the sake of another affords a most striking and beautiful illustration of the method whereby God shows his saving kindness to sinners. We are saved, not for our own sakes, not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but through the infinite mercy and kindness of God bestowed on us abundantly solely for the sake of another, even Jesus Christ our Lord. God remembers his covenant with Christ Jesus his Son, and because of that covenant and for the sake of that Son

he shows his merciful kindness to the lame, the halt, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the poor, the wretched, the sinful; and for the sake of the heavenly Jonathan the sin-deformed and cripples of the human family are adopted into the family of God and eat daily at the King's table.

Kindness to one for another's sake is the law of Christian service. When we give meat to the hungry and drink to the thirsty, when we clothe the naked and visit the prisoner and minister to the sick, we show the kindness of God unto our brethren for the sake of the Elder Brother, and he recognizes the service as rendered unto himself. If in all of our minstries of mercy to the "lame" of body or mind or soul we realized and acted on the principle of thus showing the kindness of God for the sake of our Saviour, how full of joy and blessedness would all our service be! Let each Christian ask himself daily, "Is there yet any one of Adam's lost race to whom I may show the kindness of God for my Saviour's sake?"

DAVID'S REPENTANCE.

BY THE REV. J. S. MACINTOSH, D.D.

Aug. 3.—Ps. 51.

FROM death to life, from darkness to light, such is the path of the penitent. Three stages make up that way of salvation, and they are conviction, cleansing, consecration.

Historians study eagerly, artists paint fondly, Ambrose and Theodosius, Savonarola and the Medici, John Huss and Sigismund, Knox and Mary Stuart, Melville and James. The forerunner here we see of those faithful seers from whom God's fear had taken all fear of kings. As we hear this psalm of penitence breaking in sobs from the softened heart of David, there rises up a preacher of righteousness rebuking his king. Stirring scene—older far than that at Milan, clear and bold as those of Florence and Constance, sterner and more richly fraught with good than Holyrood's. A palace, a prophet and a prince start forward into the foreground, each brightly lighted, all clearly outlined, while these thrilling and thoughtful utterances of the sincerest godly sorrow fall upon our awed souls. The palace is the God-given rest of a God-crowned victor. But over that blood-stained home hangs the cloud of doom; out of that is thrust a sharp and menacing sword never for the king's line to be sheathed. The prince is that monument of the Lord's mercy, now the ribald song of the dissolute drunkards—David the

captive of lust. The prophet is the king's lifelong friend, witty, faithful Nathan; but now he turns away in anger and grief, his soul-searching parable of the greed-snatched "little ewe-lamb" just ended, and his stern, sad lips yet quivering with, "Thou art the man." The seer goes back to stand before the Lord. The sinner repents in dust and ashes. Sorrowing he is saved, saved he sings; and this is the psalm of his penitence—David's psalm when Nathan the prophet came unto him. The Church of the blood-washed, made whiter than snow, thank God for the song of the broken and contrite heart.

Three cries make up this song :

I. THE CRY OF CONTRITION.

The careful study of David's life leads to the belief that within almost the same days David heard the rebuke of the prophet and endured the pains of retribution. Thus often, we find, bound God's words and works. Trouble on trouble comes, fast and sharp, on that lust-stained, blood-dyed sinner. Like the big, hard-smiting waves of a flooding, storm-driven sea lashing an unshielded shore, billow of sorrow after billow washes over David, till, crushed, stricken in conscience, confessing his guilt, the changed man beside the dead body of his child, at once sign and scourge of his sin, wails in broken-heartedness, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" "My sin I ever see." Oh how he saw it, sin, evil, transgression, iniquity, blood-guiltiness! and these names are realities in this repentance.

The world's spokesman has David proved to be in all man's deepest moods for every strongest and most sacred feeling. Has our rapt soul mused on divine glories till, burning, it bursts forth in glowing floods of hallowed praise, his are the words that best tell our thoughtful

adoration ; have God's mercies made my heart glad, no lark-like carolings like his for the ears of the Father of mercies ; am I in want, in darkness, pain and sadness, who but David has found for the wailing spirit supplications that wrestle with God like Jacob at Peniel and win like him the blessing ; and as often as I sin, and the more fully I see the exceeding sinfulness of my sin, and deeply feel that "in my flesh dwelleth no good thing," I repeat the confessions and relift the cries of this psalm. It is the penitent's model. It is a perfect manual of confession. Here all who sorrow after a godly sort find an unerring guide to pardon, peace, purity, power. But he who leads us so surely from pardon of sin through peace of conscience and purity of heart to power for good, starts in tears and pain far down the valley of contrition. What unfeigned repentance here takes full and honest shape ! David has the true sense of his own sin : " My sin is ever before me ; " as sin is evil in God's sight marked and measured, as wrong against man, as thoroughgoing foulness, more loathsome than corpse or leper, as helpless serfdom, as ill-desert calling for God's wrath and curse. Here is none of the parrot-like talk of to-day : " Oh yes, I know I'm a sinner." A forfeited heaven on one side David sees ; on the other, a deserved hell ; and between, himself guilty and God just, clear in judging.

Here is no cloaking of sin from himself or God or man. It is full acknowledgment. Like a perfect master of medicine unfolding in his clinical teaching feature after feature of the special case under treatment till the very hereditary taint is manifest, David searches out this worst sickness ; like the stern, skillful prosecutor summing up the damning evidence against an unpitied criminal, David lays bare fact after fact of his unmitigated guilt ; like a faithful, solemn judge according just recom-

pense to the evil-doer, David pronounces on himself the penalty of God's righteous law.

No frenzied shriek of feverish dream this psalm. It is the cry of thorough conviction. For months he had seen his sin. Within his soul all had been anarchy and agony. Flashes of terrible light had been shot into the gloom, and he beheld the outraged God and the butchered man. Appalling voices from altar, love and conscience had humbled him, sneering whispers from court and crowd had been caught, and the tones were hypocrite, blasphemer, thief, adulterer, murderer, enemy of God. Verily, the way of transgressors is hard. All through that woeful year God waited to be gracious. At last this long-suffering proved salvation. The contrite sinner confesses. Hearing him, I learn these fearful but fruitful lessons.

The root of sin is within myself; for me life and sin have the same date. I am the fallen child of a fallen race. The essence of sin is evil in God's sight, want of sympathy with God, alienation from him, antagonism to him—features so awful that while eye is fixed on them all else is hidden: "'gainst thee, thee only, have I sinned." The wantonness of sin and its inexcusableness are told in the words "transgressions and iniquities;" there is the law fully known, there is the right seen and not done. Oh, that devilish deed made to seem the king's grace to the brave soldier, pushing Uriah to the front of the battle! The measure, the remoter reachings of sin, and its necessary exposure to judgment, are all here. And I shudder as I see that indeed sin is "the horrific blackness of blaspheming hell."

Light thoughts about sin prevail. Be not you among the fools making mock of sin. Would you learn what sin is, hear this other Job repenting in the dust and ashes,

hear this publican of the Old Testament, hear this prodigal coming up out of the far country, hear this prophet of the broken heart and contrite spirit; and, beholding sin in its root, its rank, full upgrowth, its deadly fruit, repent that thy sins may be forgiven thee. Hear the penitent one cry, "Flee from the wrath to come; see the gathering storm, the lightning ready to leap and blast;" "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Cleanse us from all unrighteousness? Ah, yes! that washing we sorely want.

II. THE CRY FOR CLEANSING is the penitent's second cry (vs. 2, 6, 7, 9, 10).

No spirit can see sin as David saw it, no one can so turn from it unto God, with such grief and hatred as were his, and not plead this prevailing prayer: "According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions;" "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." Apprehension of covenant mercy and appropriation of the covenant means of cleansing are essential and inseparable features of true repentance. Behold them in David.

This cry for cleansing is twofold—cleanse the record, cleanse myself. Two faces are bent over the proofs of his sin—God's face and David's. From each gazer these sins must be hidden—from the one that there may be no condemnation, from the other that there may be full consolation. First from the sight of the Judge: "Blot out my transgressions, hide thy face from my sins; blot out all mine iniquities;" "Cast me not from thy presence, but cast my sins behind thy back." David seems to catch sight of an appalling scene: it is the high court of heaven; the divine Judge is on the seat whose pillars are

judgment and justice, before him this awful record—"done this evil in thy sight." The man's soul, horrified and wrung with agony, sends up the passionate, piercing cry, "Blot out my transgressions, hide thy face from my sins; blot out all mine iniquities. Cast me not from thy presence; deliver me from this blood crying aloud in thy sight." As he thus wrestles for pardon, for the cleansing of the record, mercy is his only plea, God's own self his one argument, love and the kindness of love—God's tender mercies and their multitude—grace, superabounding grace. So David cries, thus God hears; the record is clean. There is no condemnation.

Ah, but other eyes see still the sin. Cleanse me, wash me, make me whiter than snow. What orderliness, what Spirit-taught wisdom in this prayer! David knows there is no purification without pardon. Justified souls are sanctified, and only such. But all the forgiven long for cleansing. Wash me! Sin like a foul, strong stain has mingled with the lowest waters in the springs of his soul. A polluted stream may be run off, but a poisoned spring must be cured. The wells of Marah and the springs of Jericho call for their Maker's hand. So does my heart. What a terrible but fruitful view of sin! The poison mingles with each life-drop.

Thorough cleansing I need, and God must use all his means of purification. See how the words multiply. Behind each word a cleansing work. Wash me thoroughly, till warp and woof are pure; repeatedly, forcibly, till I am whiter than any fuller's art can leave his cloth. Cleanse me as the priest (Lev. 13:6-24, same word) washes the leper, for the vile leprosy of sin, shutting me out from God's house, unfitting me for companionship with God's people, eating out my life, covers me and penetrates to my very soul!

Purge me (Num. 19:13) as they do the corpse-bearers, for here is the body of sin and death clinging to me: here the whole head is sick, the heart faint—naught but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; here is death with all its loathsomeness; purge me with hyssop!

Oh wash me from my blood—the stain is in my soul; who but thyself can take out this sickening, damning spot? Wash thou me till I am whiter than the snow.

And keep me white! Create in me the clean heart. Renew, renew unwearingly in me, the steadfast, constant, sin-resisting, Satan-conquering spirit. Take not thy Holy Spirit ever again from me. Hold thou me up till my free spirit sings in the perfect liberty of an established child of grace. With what horror he looks on what he is! with what hope he looks out on what God can make him! One evening I watched from the Riffelberg the Matterhorn in a storm, thick, dark clouds around it, the forked fires hissing out from those dread masses, the hoarse voice of horror and rage making forests groan and valleys wail in despair. Never darker thing have I watched—more repulsive and baleful than that mountain which might not be touched, and that burned with fire, with the blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of the thunder; and the night grew awful with it. Morning came—no cloud, no storm—singing birds—the cattle-bells sounding soothingly—maiden's song and man's laugh, and the mountain flashing with brilliancy that dazzled, for the broad sunlight made its unstained robe even whiter than snow. But that is naught to what is here—blood-red with murder, inky-black with lust, and yet made whiter than snow!

Who can, then, bring the clean out of the unclean? None but God. Wash *thou* me and I shall be whiter than snow! And God, who provided the water and the

hyssop, the blood and the priest in the olden days, has in these last days given his Son and his Spirit—the precious blood of the Lamb which cleanseth from all sin, and his indwelling Spirit, by whom we are changed from image to image till we are like Jesus the Holy One of God.

Hear, then, Isaiah who so loved this psalm : “ Wash you, make you clean. Come now and let us reason together, saith the **LORD**: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Penitent sinners, cleaving to Christ, rejoice, for “ ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” Restored to the King’s favor means replaced in the King’s household—Pharaoh restored the chief butler into his butlership again, and he gave the cup into Pharaoh’s hands—David will serve.

III. The third cry of the penitent is the CRY OF CONSECRATION.

These new powers shall not be wasted. The new heart and the new spirit long for work. This fresh and unstinted grace to David fills his soul with thankfulness, and thankfulness embodies itself in toil for God and man. Praise is not wanting. But works surpass words. Baptized once again with the Holy Ghost, who had been resisted in the hour of Satan’s power; refilled with the joy of salvation unknown since the deadly day of wanton idleness when lust conceived and brought forth sin; strengthened with fresh might in the inner man that enabled the pardoned man to say, “ Get thee behind me, Satan;” knowing in his own gracious and gladdening experience that plenteous redemption and forgiveness which make the saint fear God in his holy mercy; and yearning over sin-cursed outcasts with the characteristic

compassion of the restored prodigal,—David, as alive from the dead, as bought with blood, as God's beloved and loving child, yielded himself in full consecration to God's service and the salvation of men. Other prodigals he would bring back to their loving Father. On his forsaken harp he lays hold anew, and, singing loudly like a freed bird, he pours out new and sweeter songs of salvation, making by his thirty-second and twenty-third psalms palace and tabernacle, city and country, ring again with the righteousness and mercy of Him who restoreth our souls. Grace from God always produces giving to God. Labor is as love, and love is as forgiveness. Where there is no condemnation there should be full consecration.

Here is full consecration (vs. 13-19), and that holy offering completes repentance, the full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience. Forgiven and washed at the cross, we go out to serve constrained by love. Taken back to God's heart and home, we live not to self. Bought, we are wholly God's. So here all David's powers are dedicated. The power of a saved soul: I will teach transgressors thy way and sinners shall be turned to thee. The power of the sweet singer: I will sing aloud of thy righteousness. The power of the sovereign: Build thou the walls of Jerusalem, and then joyous and peaceful gifts shall load thine altars, the generous gifts of grateful prince and people. The mercies of God have moved him to give himself a living sacrifice—the offering which the Lord supremely loves and most loudly demands.

What guilt, what grace! what ruin, what restoration! Where sin abounded, grace has superabounded; sin did reign unto death, grace is reigning unto life.

Go thou and do likewise: sinning, repent; repenting, believe; believing, yield thyself unto God, bring forth fruit unto holiness, and the end shall be everlasting life.

A BSALOM'S REBELLION.

BY THE REV. JOHN HALL, D. D.

Aug. 10.—**2 Sam. 15 : 1-14.**

SIN is unutterably hateful in God's sight; and that hatred is not lessened by its being found in his people. He will employ severe correctives with them—all the more severe because their sin is aggravated by their standing and their knowledge. It was bad enough for any man to break up a family, and to do it with blood-shedding, but it was specially criminal in David, for whom God had done so much and by whom he had taught so much. But these two things David had done in the matter of Uriah and his wife (ch. 11 : 6-27).

The punishment of sin is commonly so framed that it recalls, and connects itself in the sinner's own memory and in the reflection of others with the form and quality of, the transgression. Illustrations of this might be easily multiplied from the biographies of the Bible. Hence, when Nathan the prophet carries God's message to David, and distinctly states to him the form of his sin, these two points are singled out—the taking of the wife and the compassing of the death of the unhappy Uriah (ch. 12 : 9): “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the chil-

dren of Ammon;" and as is the double sin, so will be the double punishment: "The sword shall not depart from thine house;" and the reason is explicit, "Because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife." He had gone as a plunderer into another's house. The penalty shall be in the line of the sin, as is seen by v. 11: "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun." Of the sad fulfillment of that threatening in one part of it our lesson is the melancholy record. Things do not come by chance or through unreflecting and inanimate law, but according to the will of a holy and almighty Person who is just and righteous in all his ways, and will by no means clear the guilty.

After domestic broils and the violent death of Amnon in circumstances full of horror and disgrace, and after Absalom's banishment and return, this adroit and unscrupulous man, impelled by his own ambition, and having no idea of co-operation with Deity in the punishment of evil, sets about dethroning his own father and, if possible, possessing himself of the crown. There is no violence in the supposition that he saw his own position and prospects endangered through influences connected with the place which Bathsheba held in David's affections. Soon after his reconciliation with his father (ch. 14 : 33) he began to carry out his designs and adroitly make his party. When one thing is radically wrong, other wrong things follow in the train of it. Like woes, sins cluster. Probably there was neglect in the administration of justice. David was becoming head of a strongly-armed people, and details of personal right and

wrong were possibly neglected while great national enterprises were being pushed. So Absalom began by assuming impressive airs of state. Adonijah pursued the same policy (1 Kings 1 : 5). The people of the Orient set much store by imposing appearance. He was now availing himself of restored favor. It was as though he said, "Let it be seen how high my rank, how great my position." (See 1 Sam. 8 : 11.) Runners swift of foot and ready to act as messengers were an important part of a royal Oriental retinue. (See 1 Sam. 4 : 12.)

The city-gate was the place for the administration of justice (Ruth 4 : 1), and those who were charged with dispensing it held court early in the day. On the approach to the court an anxious litigant is greeted with frank courtesy by the handsome and stately Absalom, who with the deepest interest inquires about his residence and his business. Won by the affability of such a distinguished and exalted questioner, the man tells his place and his grievance. The hollow courtier has the same story for each. He reaches a verdict without the trouble of a hearing of the case or the appearance of the other side. The man is delighted. He thinks Absalom's judgment as sound as his heart is good and kind. He is at rest. After such an assurance of his being in the right as he has just heard, it is only a matter of form to put the thing through. But, ah! here is the trouble, and, judging from his manner, it is plainly giving Absalom much grief. There is no hearer, deputy or officer to examine the case and report to the king. How it vexes his spirit to see these men come up from the remoter towns, and nobody to deal with their cases and right their wrongs! Now the softened, hoodwinked plaintiff was ready to say Amen to Absalom's aspiration with a lying assurance in its bosom: "Oh that I were made judge in the

land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!" (2 Sam. 15 : 4). And when the simple provincial, in addition to such intelligent sympathy with his wrongs, found himself taken by the hand and kissed by the handsome pretender, he was sure to go back to his town and say that David had become useless as a king and was neglecting his duties, and that things never would be right until Absalom, who was as wise he was elegant, filled the throne.

Alas, poor human nature! It is the same to-day that it was in David's time. "Ambition," as a word, comes from the Roman politicians going about in their canvass for votes, fawning upon and flattering the people. English ladies of rank have gone and coaxed and caressed butchers whom they scorned to secure their votes for their husbands or their protégés. Members of legislatures have kissed the children and hobnobbed with their parents to make reputation among them. Doctors have sat as "friends" by the bedside of the wealthy, hinted their regrets that more vigorous measures were not adopted and more hopeful views taken by the physicians in attendance, only dropping their smooth generalities when the device succeeded and they were called into consultation, and regard for their reputation compelled them to agree with the rest. It is all in the same line with the policy of the mean, smooth-mannered traitor who (v. 6) "stole the hearts of the men of Israel."

There is an undoubted mistake in the number "forty" in v. 7, though some high authorities have adopted it. The number "four" is found in the Arabic, Syriac and Josephus, who dates the period from the reconciliation with David. It took three years to carry out his schemes, make his party and arrange for his being proclaimed. So he made a pretence of going to Hebron,

the old capital, which probably resented the loss of its prestige, where friends of his youth probably lived and could be counted upon, and where his father had been crowned. It is not needful to ask if his vow were a reality. He was now at his ease in lying, and could readily supply the details of v. 8. There was a reassuring air of piety in this which beguiled the too fond father, and he said, "Go in peace" (v. 9). The advantages of this plea were many. David had set the example of such proceedings (1 Sam. 20 : 6) at Bethlehem; Absalom had a taste for large entertainments (ch. 13 : 23-27); vows were then recognized; and this avowed design would account for the large number of attendants accompanying him, and who, as it appears from v. 11, went in their simplicity and "knew not anything." So their departure raised no alarm, and when they found the movement so general they had no choice but to fall in with it; for his emissaries had already their instructions to make a simultaneous movement throughout the tribes and proclaim him king at Hebron.

To keep up the show of things, Absalom offered sacrifices, in which all who partook were to be held as pledged to his support. Men of this sort will use religion for their own ends. History since the Reformation has many a sad case of rulers shaping their religious courses so as to secure popular sympathy. Meanwhile, and in order to have him at the banquet, Absalom invites Ahithophel, a man of influence, whose adhesion would carry great weight, as he was David's counselor. Absalom probably knew his feelings of discontent and dissatisfaction with David. He may have been thwarted in his own plans or aims; he may have received less consideration than he thought his due; he may have dreamed of higher influence under a new régime; or he may have been the

grandfather of Bathsheba, whose father was Eliam (ch. 11 : 3), and, according to ch. 23 : 34, Ahithophel had a son of that name. (Blunt puts this among his many "undesigned coincidences.") His place, Giloh, was not far from Hebron.

The fickleness of "the crowd" has been often described and often sadly illustrated. Absalom's plans now seemed sure to succeed. "The conspiracy was strong." He had many friends throughout the tribes. The fascination of his personal approaches, the fair promises he had informally made, the relation he sustained to royalty already,—all these things influenced the people, and his following "increased continually."

Ill-news will commonly travel fast. "A messenger"—from some friend perhaps—to David announced the extent of the movement, no doubt with details of Absalom's plans as far as they were known or inferred. The afflicted king realized the danger, and at once decided upon flight. There were two good reasons for this: No preparation had been made for the defence of Jerusalem, and an attack on it would have been disastrous in the extreme. But such an assault would have been the natural and politic course of the rebels if David remained there and attempted to hold the city. It was both humane and politic to quit the capital. At the same time, the flight must be prompt and rapid, "lest he overtake us suddenly and bring evil upon us." This suggests the second reason: Flight gave time for the development of events and for calm reflection on the part of the people. This shrewd view was held, it will be noticed, by Ahithophel (ch. 17 : 1, 2), and also by Hushai the Archite (ch. 17 : 7-13). They looked at it simply as managers and political observers. David may have had in mind also the prediction of Nathan. He realized the uselessness of present

resistance. Any hope there was for his cause depended on his gaining time. Hence his flight, so vividly described in the succeeding verses (15-18).

The following points may be emphasized with profit:

(a.) *The home and the public welfare* are inseparably linked. Samuel's sons took bribes and proved unfit for continuing the system of judges. David's family-life was not as it ought to have been, and murder, widespread rebellion and slaughter, with indescribable dishonor and disgrace and danger to the kingdom, are the results. The suffering, too, falls on the sinning family first of all.

(b.) Bad morals on the part of rulers relax the ties of obedience and make government contemptible. The plausibilities of the rebel son drew their force from real faults of David's administration. We may well pray for just and pure men in places of power.

(c.) But over and above these natural effects we have the just rule of Jehovah. David in his misery and penitence owns this. There is a difference between him and an enemy of God. (See ch. 15 : 25, 26.) Hence his language regarding the cursing of Shimei (ch. 16 : 11).

(d.) The life of Absalom speaks to both parents and children, setting in a clear light the weakness, folly and sin of unreasoning parental indulgence, and on the other hand the atrocious character of ingratitude, selfishness and disobedience on the part of a child. Vices go in groups. They deaden sensibilities; one prepares for another. The impure and lustful will be ready for dishonesty, violence and unnatural crime. He was false in every relation of life—to the people, to his father and king, to God; and he, with all his brilliancy and ability, found that “the way of transgressors is hard.”

THE DOOM OF ABSALOM.

BY THE REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

Aug. 17.—*2 Sam. 18:17.*

HERE is a sun-setting in the noon of life that is worth our most careful study. Here is an obituary which the Spirit of inspiration has prepared for the reading and the reflection of all after generations. It is a sudden end, and more than end; it is a total, terrible wreck of all—hope, name, character and immortal soul. It is a catastrophe in kind such as we sometimes behold in our own time and country, and such as the omniscient Eye often has beheld in this world, where sin rears its own gibbet and becomes its own executioner. We could hardly expect any other end for a man who began wrong, who lived wrong, and continued in the path of wrong to the dark and bloody end.

Absalom began wrong. Mark this, parents and educators of the young! Let all Sabbath-scholars, all young men and maidens, note this fact, that the very first step in the recorded history of Absalom was in a crooked path. The key to his remarkable and wretched career is found in the one word *deceit*. His very name is a synonym of treachery. We do not read of a single act in all his life that was open and above-board; everything was tortuous and treacherous, conceived in cunning and brought forth in iniquity.

His first practice of deceit was when his brother Am-

non, for the gratification of his lawless lust, had violated his beautiful half-sister Tamar. Amnon was the eldest son of David by Ahinoam the Jezreelite; Absalom and Tamar were the children by Maacah, the daughter of the king of Geshur. For the infamous crime of Amnon there was no more excuse than there would be for willful murder; and while King David felt and uttered the most bitter indignation, he forbore to punish the criminal because he was his first-born. (So are we informed by a passage from the Septuagint.) Two wrongs never make one right: Absalom's plot to assassinate his eldest brother had no justification in the lecherous crime of that guilty brother. The law of the land did not make Absalom the avenger of his sister. But behind the spirit of revenge there must have lurked a deeper and subtler purpose—to remove out of the way an elder brother who would be the heir-apparent to the throne of Israel. So the wily Absalom opens his house to his deflowered sister, and then plots the murder of her ravisher. "Hold thy peace, my sister," whispers the wily man; "he is thy brother; regard not this thing"—as if he had said, "Leave this thing to me and say nothing."

By and by comes his opportunity. At the time of the annual sheep-shearing, when the accustomed feast for that occasion was prepared, Absalom sent an urgent invitation to his elder brother to be present at the festival. The secret instructions given to the servants were more worthy of a Spanish bandit than of the son of Israel's Psalmist. "Mark you now," says the treacherous chief-assassin—"mark you now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon, then kill him. Fear not; have I not commanded you?" The scarlet edict is executed to the letter. The sword is drawn in David's own family—that destroying

sword which he had provoked by his own crime against Uriah, for God had declared, "Evil shall be raised up against thee out of thine own house." In the midst of the feast, when the licentious Amnon has drunk himself into pitiable powerlessness, in upon him rush the armed servants of the master of the house, and a brother's blood stains the floor of the banquet-room. "For the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded."

So ends the first chapter in a career of treachery. But it is only the prelude to the more extended and eventful chapter which describes the treasonable plot to usurp a father's throne and to crush a fond, over-indulgent father's heart. Of all the details of Absalom's conspiracy—of the wily acts of the demagogue which he practiced in order to steal away the favor of the people from their sovereign, and of that most astounding trick of hypocrisy by which he went to Hebron under a pretence to "serve the Lord," but with a secret purpose to head a rebellion,—of all these sickening details the previous Sabbath-school lesson treats at length. One most significant fact must not be overlooked, for it illustrates how the arch-deceiver was himself the victim of a deception.

Ahitophel, who had been beguiled away from his allegiance to King David, advised Absalom to take possession of his father's harem in Jerusalem and to send a powerful army to strike down the royal forces at a single summary blow. This counsel, followed out, might have given success to the rebellion and to the usurper. But a sagacious friend of David, one Hushai, who had joined himself to Absalom in order to mislead him by his crafty counsel, gave an opinion which led to the rejection of the counsel of Ahithophel. Hushai's treacher-

ous counsel is greedily swallowed by the traitor; the deceiver is himself deceived. So doth God leave the crafty to be taken in their own craftiness. Absalom, the traitor against his country and his king, is stung by a treason in his own ranks. Having dug a pit of falsehood and crime, how soon he is himself engulfed in one which proves to be a bottomless pit of retribution and ruin! For when did a man ever undertake a stupendous system of fraud without finding himself, sooner or later, completely entangled in the meshes of his own artifice and hopelessly betrayed by that arch-gamester, Satan, who is the father of all lies? *Deceit is its own destruction*, is the striking "moral" which flares out on the forefront of all Absalom's career, from the crafty assassination at Baal-hazor to the final overthrow in the wood of Ephraim.

Let us now turn our eyes upon the tragical doom which forms the fitting wind-up of one of the most remarkable chapters in Old-Testament history. It began in cunning craft, it was carried on with crime, it ended in carnage.

King David unfurls his royal standard at Mahanaim, an important walled town on the east side of the river Jordan and south of the brook Jabbok. He rallies his loyal troops, who are ready to stand by the "old flag" under which they had fought so often, and fought so well; he divides them into three army corps, and sets over them "captains of thousands and captains of hundreds." Joab, the ablest of his field-marshals, commands the first corps; Abishai commands the second; Ittai the Gittite commands the third. David offers to lead the whole, but his people will not consent that he risk the sacred life that is "worth ten thousand" of their own. So

he takes his place beside the city-gate, and, as Napoleon used to review his grand army as it marched forth to battle, the old king of Israel reviews the veterans as they file past by hundreds and by thousands. His heart is full of agony: the campaign is not against uncircumcised Philistines or any foreign foe; it is against his own son, his beloved son, his petted and ungrateful son, his own splendid, reckless, ruined Absalom! Bitter as is the heart of the royal army toward the traitor, the old father's heart is as soft as water. The atrocious crime against a father's crown and father's life was not sufficient to quench a father's blind, inextinguishable affection. Few passages in any literature are more pathetic than David's last injunction to his officers in command. He calls Joab and the other marshals around him and says to each of them, "Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, even with Absalom."

Oh, how bad a son may be to the kindest of parents! and yet how tender a parent may be to the worst of children! "Deal gently with him for my sake." How often do we hear this pathetic plea from heartbroken parents in behalf of their transgressing and dishonored offspring! "My son is guilty," sobs out the father's wounded heart; "he has indeed committed the theft or the forgery or the deed of violence, but, oh, do not bind the prison-fetters on the hands that I once led in boyish innocence!—My poor daughter has sinned, and sinned herself into the shadow of a dark shame; but deal gently with her for that mother's sake who is now an angel before the throne of God." David! David! thou speakest like a father, but those iron-clad men listen to thee only like warriors. They are men of blood, and they are going out to do soldiers' work. "Dealing gently" is not the tactics of a battlefield. In a few hours the armed hosts are out of

sight, moving rapidly toward the wood of Ephraim, which lay upon the east side of the Jordan in the land of Gilead.

Absalom comes up with his rebel army confident of victory. The royal army meets him in the wood of Ephraim, and for hours the fight, like the sanguinary fight in the Virginia "Wilderness," was scattered over the face of all the country. The wood devours more than the sword amid its pits, precipices and morasses, and the carnage on the side of the insurgents is terrible. Through one of the thickets of terebinths rode the effeminate "young pretender," endeavoring to escape from the battlefield. He has gone into the fight with his long tresses unshorn, and as the royal mule passes through the thick branches of a terebinth tree his locks are caught. His long hair becomes his halter, and the affrighted mule dashes away, leaving him suspended "between the heaven and the earth."

One of the loyal soldiers discovers him in this pitiful plight and tells his commander Joab: "Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in a terebinth."—"Why didst thou not smite him there to the ground?" exclaims the iron-hearted general: "I would have given thee ten shekels of silver and a girdle."—"Though I should receive a thousand shekels," replies the fine-hearted fellow, "yet would I not put forth my hand against the king's son; for the king charged thee, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom." No one remembers the royal charge better than Joab does, but king and country are more to him than a father's suffering heart. "I cannot lose time in talk," is the substance of Joab's impetuous reply, and, hastening to the spot, he drives three darts through the quivering form of the young traitor. Ten armor-bearers compass the wounded, dangling body and thrust their weapons through it until life is extinct.

For that lifeless form a stately monument had been prepared by the proud Absalom years before in the vale of Shareh, south-east of Jerusalem. There his name, perpetuated by no son, was to be kept in honorable remembrance. Ah, how little did he then dream of the ignominious sepulture that awaited him! For the soldiers cast the mangled body of the traitor into a pit and hurled a great heap of stones upon it. His life had been the life of a dastard, his burial is the burial of a dog. To this day no Israelite passes even that fictitious monument in the valley of Jehoshaphat (which erroneously passes for the "Tomb of Absalom") without flinging a stone at it and exclaiming, "Cursed be the memory of Absalom! and cursed be every child who rises up in rebellion against his parents!"

We also re-echo the righteous malediction, "Cursed be the memory of the son who began with the assassination of a brother and ended in unholy war upon a gray-haired father!" Into a pit which his deceitful heart has digged he falls through deceit himself. The indulged son is the ruined son, the shame of his father and the bitterness of her who bare him. Oh that bitterness! Into every soul in the army, even into Joab's hard heart, the iron enters. Even he relents into a strange tenderness over the tragedy when he says to Ahimaaz, "This day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead." Joab knows too well what terrible tidings must be carried, and so he would fain excuse Ahimaaz, his own friend and a favorite of his royal master, from so unwelcome an office. But there is a Cushite standing by—probably a foreign slave who had acted as a courier before—and Joab feels no scruple in loading the awful message upon his shoulders. So he says to the nimble-footed Cushite, "Go tell the king what thou hast seen,"

and the Cushite salutes his master with a low salaam and runs. Evil news flies fast. But Ahimaaz, anxious that the good tidings of the victory shall be borne first to the monarch's ears, persists in his request to be the message-bearer. "Run then," replies Joab; and Ahimaaz chooses the easier road to Mahanaim, which lay across the plain. The Cushite has chosen the more difficult road over the hills of Gilead. The first courier to come in sight is Ahimaaz. As the anxious old monarch sits waiting between the gates the watchman on the tower calls down to him that the running of the foremost courier is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. "He is a good man," eagerly responds the expectant sovereign—"he is a good man, and he cometh with good tidings." Into the royal presence bursts the panting racer and shouts aloud, "Shalom! Shalom!" ("All is well!") The first intelligence which Ahimaaz reveals is indeed glorious; the rebellion is overthrown, and David's life and throne and crown are saved. But to the father's trembling heart what are throne or crown in comparison with the idolized, ungrateful son? And the king says eagerly, "Is Absalom safe?" No answer to that question, but a sorry quibble instead of it. Here comes the Cushite: "Tidings, my lord the king! The Lord God hath avenged thee this day of all that rose up against thee." But, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" is the first question thrust back into the face of the tired courier. The Cushite, with wonderful delicacy, as if he would wrap an arrow around with felt, answers, "The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is."

Make way for the poor old man now, and let him pass along. Lend him an arm as he staggers up to the chamber over the gate. Talk not to him now about battles or

victories or crowns. His heart is coming out. And as he ascends the stairway we hear his wailing and bitter cry: "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" The door closes and shuts in the weeping father. He is alone with his crushing grief—such a grief as more than one crushed parent in our day is made to feel. But through the closed doors we overhear the same continual wail, "O Absalom! Absalom, my son, my son!" Out through the streets flies the thrilling intelligence. The glorious victory leaps from tongue to tongue, and the people gather around the gateway with a strange mingling of joy for the triumph and of sympathy for the poor old heart that is breaking beneath its robes of royalty. As the crowd swarms together they hear no shouts of triumph, no blasts of horn or of trumpet, but with a hushed and pitying awe they listen to the plaintive cries as they break forth from that chamber of agony: "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Well mayst thou weep, heartbroken father, for thou didst bring all this upon thine own gray head. This bitter agony is thine own merited punishment. Absalom has paid the awful penalty of his iniquities; upon him has been fulfilled the divine anathema, "Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death." But thine own sin has at last found thee out, and is laying on its lash of bloody retribution. God's mill grinds slowly, but thine own heart is being crushed beneath the stones. Does any one inquire, "For what was King David punished?" We answer that he had been guilty of at least a four-fold sin:

(1.) He had indulged Absalom with a weak and a wanton and a wicked indulgence; the son repaid the criminal

folly with contempt and cruelty. Millions of spoiled children have repeated this same retribution ever since.

(2.) David had deceived Uriah by a detestable trick that makes our blood boil as we read of it. Absalom, the arch-deceiver, paid him back "in his own coin" at compound interest.

(3.) David's crime of uncleanness had been perpetrated not many years before. When Nathan the prophet had rebuked the adulterous deed, he said to the royal libertine, "Behold, the Lord will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house; and thy wives will be given to thy neighbor, and he shall lie with them in sight of this sun." Of the shameless acts perpetrated by Absalom in the royal harem at Jerusalem during his father's brief exile we need only remind you.

(4.) Finally, the Psalmist-king, whose lust, when it had conceived, had brought forth sin, discovers to us how sin when it is full grown bringeth forth death. The blood of Uriah has come back upon his own head; the desolator of Uriah's home has found his own house left to him desolate.

That heap of stones over the mangled form of Absalom is the fitting doom of filial ingratitude and a lifelong career of deception. That broken heart in the tower of Mahanaim is the just retribution of the sins once committed by David himself in the palace of Jerusalem. And it was the memory of those sins which, like a ghost that will not be "laid," wailed and sobbed and cried aloud in that upper chamber, "O Absalom! Absalom, my son, my son!"

THE PLAGUE STAYED.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL J. NICCOLLS, D. D.

Aug. 24.—2 Sam. 24:15-25.

THERE are some difficult and perplexing questions lying at the threshold of this lesson. It is an account of a terrible judgment falling upon Israel by divine appointment in which seventy thousand men perished; and all this comes to pass because the king had taken a census of his people. What wrong was there in this act? Moses had twice numbered Israel without incurring God's displeasure; besides, what is more reasonable and proper than that a king, in order to rule wisely should know the exact number of his people and the resources of his kingdom? Again, if it was an offence against God, why should Israel be punished for that which was done at the command of the king and against the remonstrances of his advisers? Whatever may be said in answer, it must be remembered that facts like the one here recorded are to be found in history and daily experience as well as on the pages of the Bible. God's providential dealings with men often come to us in such a way as to suggest questions concerning his goodness and justice. We see the severity of his judgments, but we cannot trace directly their connection with the sins that called them down. Also, we see innocent men by the thousands involved in the dreadful consequences of

the pride, ambition or contentions of a few guilty ones, who often survive the ruin they bring upon others. If, then, objections are made to the incident here recorded as unjust, dishonoring to God, and so incredible, precisely the same objections must lie against many of the acts of his providence as they appear in history or under our own observation. Of this, however, we may be sure at the outstart: God's judgments are right, although the nature and heinousness of the sins judged may be unknown to us. He does not wait for us to see our sins before he reproves us, but often reproves that we may see our sins. It is written: "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." In this case there was some evil motive or purpose underlying an act that was innocent in itself. There has been much conjecture as to what it was, for the record does not reveal it in distinct terms. In all probability, David's course was prompted by pride and ambition. The fact that the numbering was done by the general of the army, and that the results told the number of fighting men, gives reason to suppose that David was contemplating foreign conquests and the invasion of surrounding nations, so as to bring them under his sceptre. With this design, so utterly contrary to the divinely-appointed destiny of Israel, the more warlike and ambitious spirits among the people probably sympathized. But, whatever was the purpose in view, it must have been manifestly dishonoring to God and contrary to his revealed will when a man like Joab was reluctant to execute it. David is surely blinded by kingly pride when his unscrupulous captain-general is moved to say, "Why doth my lord the king delight in this?" In the book of Chronicles it is written that "Satan provoked David to number Israel." David himself

had scarcely received the results of the census when he confessed his folly and wickedness in what he had done. Acts that appear to be harmless may be most hateful in God's sight on account of the secret motives that prompted them. We can also see from the record that David was not the only guilty one. In the opening of the chapter is this significant sentence: "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go number Israel and Judah." God is not the author of sin, nor does he ever tempt men to sin (James 1:13), but often, in the language of Scripture, that is attributed to him which he permits to come to pass, and which also vindicates his wisdom and justice in the retributive punishment of sin. In this sense he is said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart. He often so arranges it that the sin of one man becomes the agent or the occasion of the punishment of the sins of others. The transgressions of a people are most frequently punished through the sins and follies of their rulers. The ambition, pride or drunkenness of a ruler may be made, in divine providence, the agent for punishing a people for their covetousness, their sensuality or their oppression of the poor. In this case we can only conjecture what was the sin of the people. It may have been pride and self-glorying, a disposition which fed the vanity of the king and led to the act which God so severely judged. Be this as it may, it was manifestly some sin that involved both the king and the people in common guilt, though David, as ruler and the persistent leader in the wickedness, is guiltiest of all. "The sins of the people all contributed to the deluge, but it was David's sin that immediately opened the sluice."

- I. In this lesson we have, first, an account of the judg-

ment: "So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel; and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men." Here is judgment following repentance and confession. David had already said, "I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing, but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly." But this national sin, which had its manifestation in David's numbering the people, was too offensive in God's sight, and too dangerous to the life of the nation, to go unrebuked. There are some sins which, though truly repented of and forgiven, still bring retributive consequences from which the transgressor cannot escape in this life. He must wear them as brands of condemnation set upon sin by divine justice for his own and others' good. These consequences, while they come in just retribution, are also sent in mercy as God's barriers against the progress of sin. If in this case the sin of the people was pride and self-glorying, then the connection between it and the judgment is manifest. The plague withers their glory from Dan to Beersheba. It must have reminded them of the time when Egypt's pride and godlessness were rebuked in a single night. Their judgment answers to their sin as an echo to the sound. Pride and consequent godlessness are most offensive in the sight of God, and have brought about the downfall of many nations as well as of individuals. Especially are they offensive when found among the people of God. Boasting of numbers or of wealth is no evidence of spirituality, but, on the contrary, marks a base reliance on the flesh. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

It is here affirmed that the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel. Plagues and pestilence have various national and physical causes. But it is equally plain that

they are connected with the sins and follies of men. They are the penalties of violated law. In other words, they have a place in the righteous government of God, and so come to execute his will. Here the pestilence is attributed, instrumentally, to angelic agency. So also in the case of the destruction of the army of Sennacherib. It is not incredible that natural laws and agencies should be placed under angelic control for the execution of the divine wrath or for the correction of the people of God. If man's intelligence can use natural forces and make the material world the instrument of his will, why cannot angels, who excel in wisdom and strength, do the same at God's command?

II. This lesson furnishes an example of true penitence. There is much sorrow in the world on account of sin, and many transgressors, especially when suffering from the consequences of their evil doings, bitterly reproach themselves and bewail their folly. But all this is only the sorrow of the world, "which worketh death," and not that "godly sorrow" which "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." Here is a case of genuine repentance which is accepted with God. It is best to study it in contrast with the conduct of a false penitent like Pharaoh or Saul when suffering under the divine judgments. David's confession was not extorted from him by the pressure of the divine judgment. Before it came he saw his sin, and said unto the Lord, "I have sinned greatly in that I have done." Pharaoh never admits his sin until he can no longer endure the plague that has come upon him, and no sooner is it taken away than he hardens his heart and goes back to sinning. Divine judgments are often, indeed, instrumental in arousing men to see the enormity of their guilt. They are

used as goads to prick a dull and sleeping conscience. But true penitence is not the result of fear. It springs from seeing the hatefulness and wickedness of sin as done against the wisdom, justice, holiness and love of God. Sin is folly, and brings ruin to the transgressor, but its chief enormity lies in the fact that it is done against a God of holiness and love. So true confession is confession to God. As in another case David said, "Against thee, thee only (chiefly), have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight," so here he confesses his guilt to God. It is not the shame he had brought upon himself or the ruin he had caused to come upon others, though these were indeed to be deplored, but the wrong he had done against God that caused him his greatest sorrow and anguish. He is also ingenuous in his confession. He makes no reservation and pleads no palliation of his conduct: "Lo, I have sinned, and done wickedly." The spurious penitent is always bringing forward excuses for his sins: "I have sinned, but I was sorely tempted," or, "I have sinned, but not as greatly as others." David, on the contrary, sees his sin so clearly that he has no disposition to blame others, nor do we hear a single word from him about the sins of the people. His conduct also, while lying exposed to judgment, is characteristic of a truly penitent man. Pharaoh said, "I have sinned; entreat the Lord that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail." He is troubled about the judgment, but not about his sin; get him relief from the plague, and sin will be no grief to him. But David says not one word about the removal of the plague; on the contrary, feeling that he justly deserves it, he asks that it may fall upon him and his house instead of the people. Fully alive to his guilt, he has not one word to say against the divine judgments; he only asks that his iniquity may be taken away. Nor can

we fail to admire the admirable charity and unselfishness manifested in his prayer. He who in his pride was ready to lead the people forth to battle to be slaughtered like sheep for his glory is now in his humility ready to die for them. Since his folly has brought ruin to them, he is ready to make reparation though it cost him his life and that of his own house. What a contrast between him and Saul! The latter, while saying that he has sinned, blames the people for his disobedience, and then begs of the prophet that he will honor him before the people. He has no thought above self and his own glory.

III. This lesson also shows us how saving mercy was obtained for Israel. The judgment of God was righteously destroying the people, and his mercy, though free, sovereign and ready to save, could not ignore his righteousness. There must be a way opened for its manifestation if Jerusalem is saved. This is secured through the divine appointment. David is directed by Gad, a prophet of the Lord, to build an altar unto the Lord, that the plague might be stayed from the people. The place selected was the threshing-floor of Araunah, the Jebusite, where David and the elders of Israel saw the angel—the same place, as we may infer from 1 Chron. 22:1, on which the temple was subsequently built. There the sacrifice appointed by God was offered up for the sins of the people; the blood of the innocent flowed for the guilty, and “the plague was stayed from Israel.” Then, as we read in the book of Chronicles, at the altar of sacrifice the angel of justice sheathed his sword. In all this we can scarcely fail to see a foreshadowing of a more wonderful manifestation of grace to a lost and guilty world, obtained through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It was not by David’s tears of penitence and confession

of sin that the plague was stayed. It is written, "David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. So the Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel." In like manner, not our tears or prayers or confessions, but the blood of Christ shed for us, furnishes the only ground for the removal of the sentence of death which the broken law of God has passed upon us. He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. By his glorious altar of sacrifice the once-outstretched sword of justice is sheathed, for "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." That which David and the elders of Israel saw long ago, through typical offerings on Mount Zion, is now ours in reality. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," and his sacrifice was declared to be accepted of God—not, as was David's, by fire descending from heaven, but, more emphatically, by his glorious resurrection from the dead. So for us there is a most righteous as well as a most gracious escape from the death of sin through our Lord Jesus Christ. It must never be forgotten that it is through him alone that we may "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

IV. This passage presents another feature of spiritual life worthy of attention. It is the spirit of generosity and unselfishness manifested by David in fulfilling the command of God. When he made known to Araunah his desire to purchase the threshing-floor, the latter, upon learning the purpose for which he desired it, not only offered to give the king the land, but also his oxen and the wooden implements of the threshing-floor for

the burnt-offering. Here was royal liberality; and it is set down to his everlasting honor in the word of God that he gave "like a king." It is certainly a striking testimony to his generosity and his piety that he so promptly offers all as a gift when he might, without wrong, have asked a full price. He stands before us as a noble representative of those large-hearted, generous men who are ever ready, when the occasion demands, to sacrifice their private interests for the public good. What a contrast between him and those ignoble, covetous souls so often found who are ever ready to take advantage of public calamities for their own profit! But his generosity is more than matched by David's. The king refuses to take his gift, saying, "Nay, but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." Here was a temptation to which a selfish man would have yielded. David had been commanded by God to rear an altar on the threshing-floor of the Jebusite. He promptly started to execute this command, and in the way of obedience he is met with the proffer of the land as a gift. Was not this to be regarded as a providential help, and to be received accordingly? It certainly presented a way of easy compliance with the divine command. But David scorns to accept such a release. He would not be content to offer to God another man's gift as his own. Here, under the law, we find a "cheerful giver," such as the Lord loves. He is not one who would bring "the blind or the broken or maimed" to offer them to the Lord. His conduct, first of all, shows the sincerity of his faith in God. A burnt-offering was one entirely devoted to the Lord and consumed by fire on the altar. So far as sense could discern, there was no profit in it. It ended in smoke. It

was purely an investment of faith. But here is one ready to give of his substance unto the Lord, nor will he offer that which costs him nothing, for he is persuaded that it is not a vain thing thus to honor God.

And never did David make a better investment of his means than when he bought Araunah's threshing-floor. It was the building-lot for the temple which for a thousand years prefigured Christ, and so became a fountain of blessing to the nations. Money invested in such a cause is not lost, but laid up in store for the life to come.

David's conduct also testifies to his delight in serving God. He does not count it a happy providence that the generosity of another should save him from the cost of the sacrifice, nor is he willing to worship God at the expense of others when he is able to give of his own abundance. It is easy to give to God that which costs us nothing, or to be generous at the expense of others; but true devotion to God scorns such baseness, and delights most of all in self-sacrifice. There are men who take special delight in recalling David's infirmities and sins, and sneeringly ask, "Is this the man after God's own heart?" But until they can equal his royal generosity and unselfishness in giving for the honor of God, and his deep and humble penitence for sin, let them be silent.

In this passage there is an apparent contradiction with what is recorded in 1 Chron. 21:25 as to the price of the threshing-floor and the oxen. Here it is said that David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver (that is, about twenty-five dollars); there it is recorded that he gave for the "place" six hundred shekels of gold by weight (a sum amounting to forty-eight hundred and eighteen dollars). There

are two ways of reconciling the apparent contradiction. Some suppose that the fifty shekels was the price of the oxen and the wooden implements of the threshing-floor, which were immediately paid for, as the offering was to be made forthwith. But the "place," or the whole tract of ground referred to in Chronicles, was subsequently bought for the larger or "full price." This is reasonable, and can be justified by the text. Or it may be that Araunah proves the sincerity of his generosity by parting with his property at a nominal price, since the king will not take it unless he can buy it—just as with us property is transferred for a nominal consideration. David in turn proves the sincerity of his generosity by giving Araunah, after the property was his, a full price and more. Here were two liberal hearts matched against each other, and the result was the compromise of generosity in which each is victorious.

GOD'S WORKS AND WORD.

BY THE REV. HANFORD A. EDSON, D. D.

Aug. 31.—Ps. 19 : 1-14.

PROVIDENCE is the best schoolmaster. He sets the right tasks and puts the pupil where he can learn them. So this boy, David, is a Bethlehem boy, a shepherd-boy. On the hillsides leading Jesse's flocks, through the long and quiet Judæan days and under the stars, he makes the surest preparations for his illustrious future. With one of God's two great textbooks always open before him, and with such a mind, he gains no ordinary acquaintance with Nature. He knows the flowers, the trees, the birds, the beasts, as only a country boy can know them. It is not only a knowing, but a loving too. Especially does the young shepherd admire and meditate upon the heavens. He has a poet's apprehension of their beauty, and, though lacking our modern accumulation of facts, he goes straight to the problem with which the latest science is still most eagerly occupied—pondering the origin of the world.

God having work to be done, there is no waiting for an instrument. David is here, prepared to write his song in the night, considering "the moon and the stars" which God has "ordained" (Ps. 8), and this morning hymn celebrating the king of day whose "going forth is from the end of the heaven." Ruskin's famous periods on *The*

Open Sky seem tawdry and immature when contrasted with the firm, clear notes of our shepherd's music.

This psalm leads us, and is designed to lead us, to a contemplation of Nature. We detect no jealousy of such studies, for no such feeling exists. Not the faintest apprehension appears lest contradictions may be discovered between the world-book and the word-book. The sympathy with Nature is complete, and not the less so because the poet has been enabled to penetrate the closest of her secrets. One may rightly ridicule "the mock spirituality of some believers who are too heavenly to consider the heavens." "The wisest of men are those who with pious eagerness trace the goings-forth of Jehovah as well in creation as in grace."

Just that is the wisdom here. The study is a reverent study. God is seen everywhere. We are impressed not so much by the distinct statements of the doctrine of creation as by the incidental suggestions of it. The lines are saturated with theology.* This shepherd-boy, lifted to a throne, still hears day and night praising God. That, to his ear, is evidently the sweetest melody.

There are, however, other voices of praise. While, doubtless, the heavens are the work of God's fingers and declare his glory, his word is yet "more to be desired." Fascinated as David has been with the contemplation of the Creator's works, he does not make the blunder of despising the written revelation. That, after all, is transcendent. "The law of the Lord is perfect;" "the heavens are not clean in his sight;" but "thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

* In an appendix to the first of his *Astronomical Discourses*, Dr. Chalmers has collated passages which teach the divine origin of the world. We might well look through David's psalms for similar passages. Cf. Ps. 121 : 2; 124 : 8; 134 : 3; 136 : 5-9; 146 : 6; 147.

Such is the contrast drawn by a mind which Providence had trained in the knowledge and love both of Nature and Scripture. Let us observe some of the grounds for a conclusion which so exalts the word above the works.

I. The conclusion is justified, in the first place, by a comparison of the *contents* of the two revelations.

From Nature we may learn the existence of an infinite personal God. There seems to be distinct scriptural warrant for such an inference: "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. 1 : 20. Cf. Acts 14 : 17; 17 : 27; Isa. 40 : 22). A Syrian rustic among his sheep would be "without excuse" for failing to see in "the moon and the stars" and in the "tabernacle for the sun" a manifestation of Deity. "Their words," reaching "to the end of the world," should be even to him an intelligible call to worship. That no other volume should be requisite to fortify us against either atheism or pantheism is a judgment which has been also reached by the best uninspired intellect. Lord Bacon would rather believe "all the fables of the Alcoran" than that this "universal frame" is "without a mind." And his logic, which is likewise Paul's logic, successfully withstands the most recent assaults of skepticism.

But is this mighty Author of the universe a friend? Has he kindness for his foes? There throbs the tremendous interrogation concerning which the heavens make to the eager shepherd-boy no answer. Possibly, he might reach a timid perhaps, a hesitating and wavering hope, but all his listening to the voices of the night and the day could not afford assurance or comfort. In-

deed, with regard to the problems which most deeply affect our welfare Nature only baffles us. The questions which came to Job "out of the whirlwind" (chs. 38, 39, 40), which time and study only serve to multiply and intensify, convince us, as they convinced him, "of ignorance and of imbecility," teaching us to "abhor" ourselves and "repent in dust and ashes;" but a new message is needed, and an "offering," before Job's latter end or ours can be better than the beginning. It is because the Bethlehem shepherds are led away from their pastures and their flocks to Bethlehem's inn and Mary's Child that the heart can rest. Let us have astronomy, but let us not fail to see how far the gospel surpasses all that Nature can possibly be made to teach. The one page that tells us of Calvary, revealing the love of God, is the great page of the greatest book.

II. Not only in its contents, however, but equally in the *proclamation* of them, is the word "magnified."

The firmament shows God's hand silently. Day and night make signs. "No speech nor language, their voice is not heard." Yet such a declaration of God's glory has its power. No wonder that Coleridge at Chamouni found himself "entranced in prayer." "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth," was an earlier poet's exhortation, which to the later worshiper seemed accomplished fact:

"Thou kingly spirit throned among the hills,
Thou dread ambassador from earth to heaven,
Great hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God."

By this "various language" of Nature the hearts of

men are sometimes reached. But incomparably more imposing are the instrumentalities selected for the utterance of the gospel.

Although the original Old-Testament account of the giving of the law at Sinai makes but little of the agency of *angels*, from other Scriptures and from the prevalent Jewish traditions it is evident that the higher intelligences of heaven were not mere spectators of that sublime event. The man Moses in his dying song tells us how "the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints" (Deut. 33 : 2). David's poetry suggests the same traditions: "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the Holy Place" (Ps. 68 : 17). In the later treatment the facts are more distinctly stated. "It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator," wrote Paul to the Galatians (Gal. 3 : 19).

The inference made by the Hebrews was natural and legitimate. Had their law been sent by angels? Did Jehovah choose for giving the truth to his people ministers so exalted? Then, surely, the communication was one to be heard. If God sent it and angels brought it, it should not be neglected. That is Stephen's argument: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, . . . who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" (Acts 7 : 51-53). It is related by Josephus how Herod the Great in the war with the Arabians, made indignant by their treachery toward his messengers, contrasted these barbarians with the sacred character of the Hebrews. "For ourselves," he said, "we have received of God the most excellent of our doctrines, and the most holy part of our laws by angels;" and he argued "that

as ambassadors are sacred when they carry messages to others, so do the laws of the Jews derive a sacred authority by being delivered from God by angels" (*Jos., Antiq.*, 15, 5, 3).

But not only were great angels chosen for this service; great men were commissioned too: "God . . . at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by *the prophets*" (*Heb. 1:1*). The pious Hebrews cherished a noble pride in that shining line of national leaders and teachers by whom Jehovah had "magnified" his "word." Merely to call the roll of these prophets excites our wonder anew at the genius and power which God laid under tribute for the utterance of the truth. To refuse to hear such messengers of salvation merited and incurred a special condemnation. (*Cf. 2 Chron. 36:15, 16; Acts 7:51, 52; Matt. 23:37.*)

Yet another Ambassador appears, however: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his Son*" (*Heb. 1:1, 2*). The announcements by angels and prophets are not enough. The word must be made manifest by the Word himself. "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?" (*Heb. 2:1, 2*).

Who will attempt to measure the vast distance between those dim suggestions of truth coming to David the shepherd from sun and moon and stars, and which we laboriously acquire from Nature, and that clear revelation of God's grace proclaimed to us by the angels, by prophets and by Christ himself?

III. It is also to be further considered by what *enforcement* of his word God has "magnified" it.

In Nature there is no provision for effectively reaching the conscience and moving the will. The heavens "declare" God's glory, but they are unable to attract us toward it. "Day unto day" has been uttering "speech," "night unto night" showing "knowlege of him," but men have not learned the lesson. The sun shines on Africa and the moon and stars give China light, but they do not "convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment." That is work beyond them, the work of the Comforter. To "apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ" the Spirit has come. We not only see God sending his Son to manifest the truth, but we see the Son sending the Spirit to emphasize and apply it. "Magnified," indeed, is the word by such an instrumentality brought to our remembrance, and with divine persuasions winning and keeping the heart.

IV. We are thus led to observe also the stupendous effects produced by God's word.

What God's works do for us is evident. Nor is it simply the supply of food and clothing, the ministry of light and heat, the satisfying in form and voice and color of our sense of beauty, the exhaustless means of education, which put us under constant obligations to the Author of Nature. There is, besides, a contribution to higher knowledge—that declaration of "the glory of God" which the Psalmist celebrates.

But in vain shall we resort to Nature to accomplish what man needs the most. "Enlightening the eyes," "rejoicing the heart," "making wise the simple," "converting the soul,"—here are effects chiefly wrought through God's word. "All the kings of the earth shall

praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth," and "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." For the highest, for the humblest, this other book of God has unfailing help. When we think of the sinners rescued, the believers confirmed, the weary sustained and comforted, the pagans enlightened, by the ministry of the word, it is clear how notably God the Almighty is exerting his power to honor it.

Do we, however, magnify the word? In our zeal to learn it, in our carefulness to practice it, in our loving effort to impart it, do we more and more prove our delight in it? If David with so small a section of the book—really its preface only—could so prize and praise it, surely the Christian, having in his hand the completed volume, illuminated by the events and discoveries of so many centuries, ought indeed to find it "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb."

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

BY THE REV. T. D. WITHERSPOON, D. D.

Sept. 7.—Ps. 27.

THIS psalm may be called the challenge of David's faith to David's fears. We have no means of determining at what period of his life or under what particular circumstances it was penned. There were so many occasions in his checkered history when every utterance of the psalm would appear to have peculiar appropriateness and significance that we are not surprised to find biographers and commentators fixing upon various periods, some as early as the anointing at Hebron (2 Sam. 2 : 4), others as late as the deliverance of the king in his old age (2 Sam. 21 : 17) through the intervention of Abishai, one of his chief captains.

It is not important that the precise circumstances should be determined. Indeed, it is often best for our spiritual edification and comfort that the details of the history should lie in abeyance, and that the grand lessons of confidence in God in all times of perplexity and trial should stand forth in clearer perspective and in bolder relief by reason of the absence of such personal traits or historical incidents as would distract our attention or divert our thoughts.

Here, then, in this beautiful psalm, we have a sublime instance of what an old divine has called "confidence in

God the best succor in the worst seasons." Let us study the psalm as illustrating the occasions, the grounds and the fruits of true confidence in God.

I. The occasions on which this confidence which the child of God reposes in his heavenly Father may be expected to appear.

As it is an abiding confidence, one "the beginning of which" is to be "held steadfast unto the end" (Heb. 3 : 14), we may expect to see evidences of it at every step in the Christian course. But it is especially in times of trial and distress that it comes conspicuously into view,

"As darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day."

In David's case we find confidence in God illustrated—

(1.) *In Times of Peril.* "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." The true child of God is often in peril. One of the most devoted and illustrious servants of Christ enumerates (2 Cor. 11 : 26) the sources of peril to which in his consecrated ministry he was exposed: "In perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren." There is nothing in such times that can stand us in stead but this assured confidence in God. When the believer can say, "The Lord is on my side," then he can safely add, "I will not fear what man can do unto me." When he can enter into the full spirit of the apostle's challenge, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" then he can calmly look the leagued opposition of earth and hell in the face, and go forward fearlessly, as Martin Lu-

ther did, when, being warned not to appear before the Diet of Worms, he said that, "trusting in God, he would go, though there were as many devils in Worms as there were tiles upon the roofs." Armed with this confidence in God, the believer may look even Death, the last enemy, calmly in the face, and say with David, "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my life and my portion for ever."

But the man who has not this confidence in God is in time of peril like a ship without anchor in the fury of the storm. "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, may Israel now say,—if it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick when their wrath was kindled against us; then the waters had overwhelmed us; the stream had gone over our soul; then the proud waters had gone over our soul." (Ps. 124 : 1-5.)

(2.) *In Times of Privation.* It is evident from the earnest desire expressed in verse 4 that when the psalm was composed David was in exile from Jerusalem and deprived of the privileges of worship in the house of God. He endured many privations, both during the period when he was persecuted by Saul and during that when he was exiled by the treason of Absalom. None of them seemed to affect him so painfully as the loss of the ordinances of God's house. "One thing," he says, "I have desired, that will I seek after." In the 84th Psalm he seems to envy the very birds that could make their nests in the temple, while he was forbidden to approach it. But in this, and in all his privations, his great support was found in his confidence in God. In the darkest hour we hear him singing, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my coun-

tenance and my God." And so there are no privations that befall the servant of God in this world, no allotments of penury or sickness or bereavement, in which an assured trust in God will not give the victory, and even enable the sufferer to say with Paul (Rom. 8 : 37), " Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."

(3.) *In Times of Desertion.* It was David's misfortune, as it has been that of many a good man since, to find that just when he needed friends most the ranks were thinnest and his standards most deserted. There are few pangs more poignant than those experienced in the betrayal of confidence, the ingratitude, the indifference, of those whom we have loved, in whom we have confided, and upon whose help in our emergencies we have assuredly relied. But David had a sure recourse when all others failed. He had a Friend who would never desert him. How plaintively, and yet how triumphantly, he says (v. 10), " When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up"! The nearest and dearest earthly friends may desert him, until he feels in his loneliness like a little child whom unnatural parents have cruelly abandoned to its fate; but there is a Father in heaven who " takes him up," lifts him and holds him to his loving bosom, places him and keeps him within the secure enclosure of the everlasting arms. Happy is he who amidst the unfaithfulness of earthly friends has found the incomparable treasure of " a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother"!

(4.) *In Times of Calumny.* A more bitter element yet was distilled into David's cup. " False witnesses" (v. 12) " are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty." He had many calumniators and slanderers, men of whom he says (Ps. 57 : 4), " Their teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." One of these was

"Cush the Benjamite," concerning whom he pours out his soul to God in the 7th Psalm. The enemies of the king, who had the ear of Saul, insinuated the poison of their misrepresentations and slanders, whilst David was utterly unable to defend himself against the aspersions which they cast upon his good name.

There is no meaner character than that of the slanderer or scandal-monger, who, too cowardly to make charges against you face to face, secretly stabs your character, without giving you the opportunity either of denial or of disproof. And yet there is no good man who is not liable to have his character either openly or at least secretly assaulted and maligned. What is he to do when false witnesses thus rise up against him? Here, again, confidence in God is his support and stay. Let him do as David did—make his appeal to God, the Searcher of all hearts, saying, "Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and according to mine integrity that is in me. My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart." Then he can say, like Job when tortured by the suspicions and insinuations of Eliphaz, "He knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold."

II. Having seen some of the occasions in which this confidence in God is called into exercise, let us look now at some of the grounds upon which it rests. These also we will find beautifully illustrated in the psalm.

(1.) The first and highest ground of confidence is found in the nature of God himself as he stands personally related to us. How beautifully the Psalmist expresses this in the opening verse: "The Lord is my light and my salvation;" "The Lord is the strength of my life"! It is not what we are, but what God is, that

affords a solid ground of confidence in time of trouble. And when we think of him as revealed to us in Christ, what more expressive or exhaustive terms could we employ to describe the blissful relations he is pleased to sustain to us than just these three: "my light," "my salvation," "the strength" (or, as Alexander translates, "the stronghold or fortress") "of my life"?

And then what an emphasis there is on that personal pronoun *my*—*my* light, *my* salvation, the strength of *my* life! It tells of an eternal covenant by which he is mine and I am his. It tells of an appropriating faith by which I have set my seal to that covenant, and claimed all its provisions and promises as mine. It tells of a mystical union betwixt my soul and him, by reason of which he is in me and I am in him, and "it is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me," so that I can say, in the quaint rhythm of Wesley,

"But this I do find,
We two are so joined,
He'll not live in glory and leave me behind."

Blessed is he who can truly say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation," "The Lord is the strength of my life"!

(2) The second ground of confidence is found in the previous interpositions of the Lord for our help. "When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell" (v. 2). It is evident that the Psalmist here refers to some particular period in his past history when he was in great danger, and when God very signally interposed to deliver him. The language in the original has an emphasis which is lost in the translation. When his enemies came upon him with all the ferocity of a hungry lion or a pack of ravening wolves, *themselves it was* that stumbled and fell,

and not he, as they had so confidently expected, and as he himself, perhaps, in the timidity of the moment, may have dreaded. This signal interposition of God's mercy and power in the past he makes a ground of confidence as he looks forward to the conflicts of the future, just as in the ninth verse he makes it the basis of a special plea, saying, "Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation."

And is there not, in the deliverances which God has wrought for us in the past, ground for the highest confidence that he will continue to put forth his power in the future? There is no presumption in "being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Here is the groundwork of our comforting doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. Chosen in the counsels of eternity, redeemed with atoning blood, regenerated and sealed with the indwelling Spirit, the righteous through God's grace "holds on his way," and "he that has clean hands waxes stronger and stronger." And as the child of God looks back over the way by which the Lord has led him, and sees how divine strength has been made manifest in his weakness, he confidently sings,

"Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home."

(3.) Closely connected with the divine interpositions on behalf of the Christian are those religious experiences which he has enjoyed, and which, as evidences of the work of God's Spirit in his heart, heighten the confidence which he has of ultimate salvation. "When thou saidst" (v. 8), "Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face,

Lord, will I seek." It is this answer, this inward echo, of the soul to the commands and invitations of God's holy word which constitutes that double witness of which the apostle speaks when he says (Rom. 8 : 16), "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." And just in proportion as the believer has this witness, his confidence in God grows stronger and more full of comfort.

(4.) A fourth ground is found in the promises of God as they are received and rested upon by faith. "I had fainted" (v. 13) "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." He does not say, "unless I had hoped," but "unless I had believed," to indicate that there was a special promise upon which his faith rested, and in the fulfillment of which he should see the goodness of the Lord—that providential goodness to which he refers in another place when he says (Ps. 31 : 19), "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" The promises of God are the very food upon which faith feeds and grows; and so the Psalmist closes with the impressive words, "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

III. Having seen the occasions and grounds, let us look, in conclusion, at the fruits, of confidence in God as they are illustrated in the psalm.

(1.) This confidence completely delivers from all fear. How boldly the Psalmist utters and reiterates the challenge, "Whom shall I fear?" "Of whom shall I be afraid?" He seems to put away from him indignantly the very thought of fear, as unworthy of one to whom Jehovah

stands in such relations as his light, his salvation and his strength. And of what shall even the weakest and most timorous Christian be afraid, seeing that “the eternal God is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms”?

(2.) Not only is there absence of all fear, but a positive sense of security from all harm in the safe-keeping of infinite love. The Psalmist uses several beautiful figures to express this idea of the perfect security of the believer: “In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion.” Jehovah, the great Captain of our salvation, takes the timid soul into his own royal tent. Surely, there the weakest and most timid may feel perfectly secure. “In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.” In that sacred place, the Holy of holies, guarded by cherubim, kept by combined forces of heaven and earth, surely the soul in tranquillity and quietness may rest. “He shall set me up upon a rock.” As though an infinite arm had lifted him up and placed him upon some lofty and inaccessible cliff, far above the rage of his enemies, he who trusts in God has that sweet sense of security to which Lord Bacon refers as possessed by him who “stands in the window of a castle and sees a battle and the adventures thereof below.” “Thou wilt,” says Isaiah (26 : 3), “keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.”

(3.) Finally: this confidence is a well-spring of happiness. “Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy. I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.” The Christian life has its *hosannas* as well as its *misereres*—its notes of joyous triumph as well as its plaintive “songs in the night.” And whenever “the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous,” the joyous refrain of each heart is (Ps. 118 : 14–16),

"The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. The right hand of the Lord is exalted, the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." The glad utterance of each separate singer is, "Thou art my God, and I will praise thee; thou art my God, and I will exalt thee," while the universal chorus in which all hearts unite is, "Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever."

The experiences of David in this psalm have been placed on record for our direction and comfort. We cannot better close our brief study of it than in the words of the same inspired writer in the conclusion of another beautiful psalm (Ps. 84 : 11, 12): "The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."

WAITING FOR THE LORD.

BY THE REV. MOSES D. HOGE, D. D.

Sept. 14.—Ps. 40 : 1-3.

THE authenticity and significance of the titles prefixed to the psalms has been a subject of much controversy among commentators.

Some have contended that they were the superscriptions of the authors themselves, written at the time the psalms were composed, under the guidance of inspiration. Others have insisted that they were the work of the compilers of the psalms, or the *scholia* of later annotators.

It might not be safe to assert, without qualification, that the titles are always as old as the psalms themselves, or that they have the sanction of divine authority, but they are surely deserving of reverential regard as forming a part of the Hebrew text as contained in the most ancient versions and recognized as authentic by the earliest interpreters.

The fortieth psalm, designed for the service of praise in the public worship of God, like many others of David, is appropriately entrusted "to the chief musician," that "the new song" which the Lord had put into his mouth might find fit expression in the noblest harmony.

It is a psalm of David concerning Christ, though every verse of it may not have reference to David's greater Lord. Many of the psalms in which such reference is found also

contain matter peculiar to the circumstances of the writer or to the condition of the Church, and cannot be made to apply to Christ throughout without a perversion of the plain meaning of language and a violation of the admitted rules of interpretation.

It is enough that Christ is the great theme of the psalms. Other flowers bloom there, but the Rose of Sharon throws its fragrance over the whole garden. Other personages are portrayed, but it is still "Jesus in the midst." Well did Matthew Henry say: "In the book of Psalms there is so much of Christ and his gospel, as well as of God and his law, that it has been called the summary of both Testaments;" and Bishop Horsley was warranted in the assertion that "there is not a page in the book of Psalms in which the pious reader will not find his Saviour if he read with the view of finding him."

There is an old European town, it is said, which has in its centre a marble church in the form of a cross. The town is so laid out in streets that at whatever corner you pause in walking through it you obtain a view of the cruciform pile in the midst. The book of Psalms is such a city. The Lamb is the light thereof. As you walk through it there is no verdant park or spacious thoroughfare, adorned with towers and palaces, from the corner of which you may not see this central radiance.

In the Messianic psalms, whatever may be the double sense, embracing both type and antitype, whatever may be the primary reference, the secondary meaning is not like the secondary rainbow—a fainter reflection of the first—but the clear shining forth of Him who was the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person.

That a portion of *this* psalm refers to Christ is placed

beyond all doubt by the fact that Paul in his letter to the Hebrews quotes a part of it and applies it directly to him. But the psalm is also full of truth designed for the instruction and encouragement of the believer, and the opening verses, to which we now confine our attention, unfold to us in a lively and affecting manner the results of patient waiting upon God in the deliverance he affords to the expectant soul, and in the soul's tuneful ascription of praise to the gracious Deliverer.

Some who read this discourse may remember the feeling of disappointment with which in their youth they read the last line of Longfellow's "Psalm of Life." The metaphors now so hackneyed were then fresh as the dew, and the sentiment of the "Psalm" grew in tender force until all ended in the disappointing anti-climax, "Learn to labor and to—wait." Any one could understand the difficulty of labor, but how easy if one had only to wait! And was this all? nothing but waiting? Who could not wait? But experience has taught us a great lesson, that all labor is light compared with the labor, the stress and strain, the suspense and weariness, of waiting. Who has not said a thousand times, "Let me know the worst, rather than be kept in the torturing realm of vague, distracting, menacing uncertainty?" The special and distinctive character of the waiting indicated in the text is expressed by the intense Hebraism, "Waiting, I waited," implying protracted solicitude, tempered by fortitude and sustained by trust. The word "patiently" is not in the Hebrew, but it is implied, and is essential to the true elucidation of the character of the waiting portrayed in the original. Such waiting is something very different from the inactivity of indolence or the torpor of unconcern. It is a waiting full of heroic elements—fortitude, resignation, faith, expectation, perseverance. It is a waiting which is never

inconsistent with working. As long as anything can be gained by effort it will be active, for it is too earnest to sit and rest when it should stand and work ; but when the desired good is something beyond its reach, when personal exertion proves unavailing and help from others is impossible, then its agitation will be calmed and its hope invigorated by its determination to wait patiently for the *Lord*.

There are exigencies in life when comfort can come from no other source. The providences of God are often so dark and full of seeming menace that the soul perturbed by them is like the ship in which Paul sailed when no small tempest lay on it, and when for many days neither sun nor star appeared. A drifting soul is in more jeopardy than a drifting ship. Adverse currents may drive it on quicksands or fatal reefs, and then it can only cast out the anchors of faith and hope and wish for day. This is often the soul's only anchorage when the inscrutable mystery which shrouds the dealings of God with men would drive it on the dangerous shoals of doubt as to the wisdom and goodness of his providence, or tempt it to deny the existence of any providence at all. The calamities which overtake the best and most useful of men while the wicked prosper and rest in the abundance of health and power and riches ; the desolation of floods sweeping away the harvest of vast valleys, of earthquakes swallowing up populous cities, of famine laying its millions low, and the apparent impassiveness of God in the midst of all this anguish ; the early deaths of the pure and good, while "they whose hearts are dry as summer dust burn to the socket ;" the long centuries of unbroken heathen debasement, and the ignorance and crime which degrade the uncared-for masses in civilized lands ; the aggressive and bloody wars waged by nations

calling themselves Christian, and the gigantic oppressions and inhumanities which make millions mourn,—these are some of the awful mysteries which confront us; and but for the assurance that the whole creation, so long groaning and travailing in pain, is waiting for the great redemption which will surely come, we would be left to a night as profound as that which enveloped Job when he cried, "A land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness."

Again, patient waiting for the Lord gives solace and strength to the Christian when disheartened by the slow growth of his own spiritual life. There is no cause of despondence more frequent than this—no complaint more common than that of the child of God under the conviction that instead of advancing he is retrograding—that so far from "forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forth unto the things which are before," with a joyful assurance of progressive attainment, he is compelled to look back for his happiest experiences as he recalls to mind "the blessedness he knew" in the early days of his espousal to Christ. Such dissatisfaction with self, when accompanied by longing for a more entire conformity to the divine image, is the sure evidence of a gracious state, though it be not recognized by the subject of it.

In building up a Christian character one cannot *see* the uprising of the edifice as an architect sees the rising walls of the house he is erecting, story added to story, until at last from the completed dome he looks up to the higher dome of the blue heavens above him, or as the traveler ascending a mountain can measure his elevation by the ever-widening prospect around him; nevertheless, he is growing into a temple for the divine indwelling, and at

last he will "gain the height of some o'erlooking hill" from which his heart will revive at the sight of the land he loves, though still afar off, and perchance catch a glimpse of the King in his beauty.

If he distrusts his attainments, it is because his standard is higher and his ideal nobler than it once was. The great Thorwaldsen declared that the most painful moment of his life was when, having completed a piece of sculpture, he recognized the fact that he had attained his ideal and could never produce a more perfect work. It is never so with the Christian aspiring to assimilation in character to his Lord. He will always be conscious of falling immeasurably below the ineffable beauty and glory of his divine Master. This must be so, not only because his standard is higher, but because his humility is deeper. Pride ever looks down, because it fancies it occupies an elevation which others have not reached, while humility, looking up and seeing the celestial summits which others have attained, beats upon its breast, bewailing its inability to rise above the valley.

Again: let those who write bitter things against themselves because of slow growth in grace wait patiently for the Lord, because *time* is an essential element in Christian maturity. Some plants germinate quickly, others require long years for the attainment of their full growth. Dr. Norman Macleod tells us that he saw an East Indian juggler place an empty box upon the sand of a barren plain. He uttered some incantations and removed the box, when, lo! there grew a beautiful shrub, covered with leaves and bright with blossoms. But the plant vanished with the juggler. No one would like to be compared to it. But David says, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." The palm does not begin to yield fruit until it is thirty

years old, and it is most productive when a hundred. The cedars of Lebanon do not attain their growth for a century, but then how strong, how shapely they stand, monarchs of the vegetable kingdom !

To eradicate all that is dark and defiling from the soul, and to cultivate the plants of righteousness until they are laden with their mellow clusters, require not only diligence, but time. "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Behold, we count them happy which endure!"

So, too, wait patiently for the Lord when discouraged because you see so little fruit of your labor. There is often a long interval between the work and the recompense, but there is a limit to this discipline, and he who has grown weary, not of his toil, but of his suspense, will reap the reward of his diligence. "He that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless return again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Parents need this encouragement who began early and continued long in their labors of love for the spiritual welfare of their children, now no longer children, and yet not children of God. What efforts they made to overcome the waywardness, the heedlessness, the thoughtlessness and forgetfulness of those so dear to them—to guard them from temptation and to lead them into the paths of peace! What prayers and tears, what admonitions when at home, what letters when absent! Will the day ever come when the parent can say, "Here, Lord, am I and the children thou hast *twice* given me—first at the time of birth, and then when born again by the Spirit"?

The Sabbath-school teacher also may take courage who

has so often been disheartened by his fruitless attempts to control the physical restlessness, and to bring the minds and hearts of those who compose the little parish over which he presides under the influence of saving truth.

And who so much needs the tranquillizing, strengthening power of patient waiting on God as the anxious pastor who has spent his best years in the service of his people, bringing beaten oil into the sanctuary, studying while others slept that he might gain more time for the accomplishment of his arduous work; who has been diligent in all the departments of his holy calling; who has warned almost every member of his charge with tears, either in public or in private; who has seen the young grow into maturity and the middle-aged grow old, many of them yet unawakened and unsaved, though they have accompanied him through vast realms of truth, and listened to argument and entreaty, and seen sacraments administered and revivals bringing others into the fold of Christ—though they have seen the dead carried out, and wept because of their own bereavements, yet all the while growing more insensible, and apparently approaching nearer to the state described by the apostle in the two fearful words, “past feeling”? May not the pastor who in the spirit of his divine Master has so long continued to cry out, “How often would I have gathered you!” at last make his appeal to God and say, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” and then, turning to his people, cry, “I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught.”?

No, it is not in vain. God is not unrighteous to forget his labor of love. He may not live to see the result of his faithful service. But what he has sown another may reap. A precious revival of religion once commenced at

the funeral of a pastor whose preaching for thirty years had not been blessed with such an ingathering of souls. The bread cast upon the waters is found again after many days. And though the man who above all others most passionately longed to see the fruit of his toils may not be gratified, those who come after him will discover that the word spoken in faith and love was a vital word, and to him who uttered it there will be reserved one of the glad surprises of the heavenly life in meeting with those who will first bless God for their salvation, and then bless him as the instrument of their conversion.

The limit allotted to this discourse affords only space in which to glance at the glad results of thus waiting on the Lord. Says the Psalmist: "He inclined unto me." What an attitude of condescending grace does this portray! Jehovah, arrayed in garments of light and majesty, seated upon a throne high and lifted up, yet not so exalted as to be above care for the humble suppliant or too far removed to hear his imploring plaint. "He heard my cry." Though for a while he seemed to disregard the prayer, it was but to test its importunity. And when at the last, bending low with the cherishing pity of a father, he encouraged the appeal of the entreating child, then, "as one whom his mother comforteth," he took into his arms the helpless sufferer. This is graphically expressed in the Psalmist's description of the rescue: "He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay." A pedestrian crossing by night an English moor in which the shafts of some abandoned mines had been sunk, fell into one of them. The pit was not deep nor the fall itself dangerous, but the bottom was filled with slime and it was impossible to clamber up the slippery sides. The night seemed long to the bemired and benumbed traveler, who could only look up and watch the constellations as they crossed

over the mouth of the pit in the sky so far above him. At last the day dawned, but no sound of wheel or hoof or footstep was heard. The day grew brighter, the sun climbed up to its zenith, but no succor came. "The impracticable hours" crept on, with no sound to break the silence and no comer to cheer the solitude, when, lo! a shadow fell across the mouth of what threatened to become a tomb. Now a great throb of expectation thrilled the heart of the watcher, but it was only the shadow of some animal browsing near the pit. Then footsteps were plainly heard and the voices of men, and the rescue came at last.

From the more horrible pit of one buried in trespasses and sins, from the depths of which God's arm alone was long and strong enough to pluck the patient waiter, was he taken up and his feet "planted on a rock." It seemed scarcely necessary that a new song should be *put* into his mouth. Such a joy as his might spontaneously burst into song. All deliverances from spiritual dangers inspire gratitude, and the heart pants beneath "the pleasing, painful load" until it finds relief in praise.

But the Christian life is life in earnest—practical life, progressive life, one of steadily efficient service. It is therefore necessary that the Christian's "goings" should be "established," in order that, advancing from strength to strength, he may at last appear in Zion before God.

Such are "God's rescues;" and the effect of them is not only to constrain the subject of them to ask, "What shall I render?" but to encourage and comfort others who are in any trouble. "Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

A SONG OF PRAISE.

BY THE REV. M. R. VINCENT, D. D.

Sept. 21.—Ps. 103.

THE Bible everywhere emphasizes the duty of thanksgiving, and aims to make thanksgiving, like prayer, intelligent. It bids us “sing praises with understanding.” The psalms of praise are not mere rhapsodies; their deep and strong feeling holds in solution much profound and serious thought. This psalm is a type of *intelligent thanksgiving*—an expression of sanctified *emotion* based upon sanctified *thought*.

We see at once how this true emotion is distinguished from mere formal thanksgiving by the words, “all that is within me”—words which appeal to the very deepest feelings of the heart. Their appeal is not met only by the responses of the stately Liturgy or by the rich harmony of Te Deums, but by the enlistment of every thought, every faculty—the affections, the will, the conscience, the reason—in giving thanks. The old liturgies give us the true key in the word *hearty* which so often occurs in them: “We give thee humble and *hearty* thanks,” or thanks from the deepest heart.

But we also notice how, as so often in Scripture, a *caution* is associated with the highest devotional feeling at the point where one, in the ardor of holy rapture, forgets for the moment that he is a sinful man in a sinful world: “Bless the Lord, O my soul! Let all that is

within me bless his holy name; yet, my soul, thou art weak and fallible, and prone to forget these very mercies which are calling forth thy praise. *Forget not all his benefits.*" Is it not evident that we need this caution? When we stand on some high peak, enraptured with the glorious prospect, how vividly the panorama maps itself in our minds, and how easy it is to describe it, and how full of detail is our description while we are yet glowing with the fresh memory of the scene! But a month hence how much barer will be our description! how many of the details will have faded from our minds! So the details of God's goodness, which in some hour of exalted gratitude come crowding into our thought, grow faint and few in cooler moments, and God seems to our fickle hearts less good than once he did.

Sometimes men become so hedged round with care and sorrow that they forget everything but the evil (or what seems such) that God has sent. Men are prone to look at troubles with the glass at its full magnifying power, but at blessings with the glass reversed. We easily persuade ourselves that no one was ever plagued as we are; but how many of us count up our blessings as we do our troubles, and conclude that no one was ever blessed as we are? And, strange to say, the most favored are often those who most need the caution, "*Forget not.*" God's blessings sometimes obscure themselves by their own multitude, as the fruit on the top of the basket conceals the equally rich fruit beneath. A man whose worldly blessings are few and far between is likely to remember them. A servant who has a holiday once a year can always tell you what happened on that day, while a rich man who has plenty of leisure will often grumble because some disappointment mars one of his hundred holidays.

When, therefore, we are tempted to think God unkind or slack concerning his promise, let us remember the monition, "Forget not *all* his benefits." Remember not only the great benefits, but the smaller ones; for what we regard as smaller blessings may be the greatest of all in God's sight. It is with blessings much as with troubles: few people, comparatively, have great catastrophes in their life, and few have great, colossal joys. There is only the daily succession of little, commonplace pleasures, and we foolishly get into the way of attaching little importance to anything which is not of the nature of a crisis. Go back over your life and pick up the happy times—the day your little child began to walk; the day your boy graduated with honor; the many evenings you have come home tired and have found rest and light and warmth and pleasant words at home; how many happy hours over a book or in conversation with a friend; what a day of sweet quiet when the terrible strain at your sick child's bed was relaxed at the physician's words, "The danger is over." These, after all, are the benefits which make up the staple of our life. They seem to be *little* blessings, perhaps because they are so common, yet if we number *all* God's benefits we shall find the sum of them very great.

The psalm specifies certain *causes* for thanksgiving; and the first of these is very significant. In giving thanks it is natural that the greatest benefits should first receive mention; and the very first thing which comes to the Psalmist's lips is *the forgiveness of his sins*. And rightly, because this is *essentially* the first fact in all thanksgiving, and is therefore the key not only to this psalm, but to the whole great lesson of Christian thankfulness. For in the prominence which is given it we see a recognition of the truth that man's first and vital rela-

tions are his relations to God; that sin throws and keeps him out of right relation to God; and that therefore his best blessing, his highest ground of thankfulness, is the restoration of this relation through the forgiveness of his sins. Without this, though loaded with God's gifts, his enjoyment of them is poisoned by the consciousness that he is a rebel and a prodigal when he should be a son at home. David tells us how the sense of unforgiven sin affected even his bodily condition: "When I kept silence my bones waxed old . . . For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Even a little child knows how a holiday or a dainty is spoiled by the memory of an unconfessed disobedience or falsehood. Thus the Psalmist's thought here is in the right order, and that order is essentially Christian, like so many other features of the Psalms. It is *Christ's* own order: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and *his* righteousness." Be right first with God, and then everything will be right.

It is true that one may feel thankful to God for his mercies without being a Christian, but it is also true that such an one does not fully appreciate these very mercies of *providence* until he associates them with the mercies of *grace*, and enjoys them as God's child through faith in Jesus Christ. He never knows the chief cause of thanksgiving until he knows the love of God in the forgiveness of his sins. Here, for instance, is a slave. Even in his slavery certain things awaken his gratitude. His master gives him a kind word, a present, a holiday. But at last the master sets him free. You see that this fact of freedom gives a new character to the very things he enjoyed before. He may have the same fare, but it is sweeter because it is no longer the bread of servitude, given to him like the bone to the dog or the hay to the

horse. He may live in the same cabin, but it is his home now. He may labor as hard as before, but he knows now the dignity and inspiration of the free man's unforced toil for his daily bread. Equal with his master now before the law, he never honored him as now; he would die for the man who made a man of him. Even so we see how much broader and stronger and deeper is the feeling which one entertains toward God and his gifts when he comes to know God as the Forgiver of his sins and the Saviour of his life, than when he knows God merely as the Giver of earthly good. He never knew God's love, he never suspected the depths of his compassion, he never appreciated his forbearance, until he realized how much God had had to bear with him. He never knew God's power until he realized the helplessness of the human will and of all human forces to change and purify a sinful nature. And in the light of this change all common things are changed. His daily bread is sweeter as he knows his heavenly Father's touch upon it; his daily toil is exalted and drudgery is made divine when he feels that his service is that of a son and of a co-worker with God. He can even give thanks for affliction and glory in tribulation, recognized now as instruments of his Father's saving discipline. We can understand now why David so emphatically styles him "blessed" whose transgression is forgiven and to whom *the Lord imputeth not iniquity.*

Having thus laid this *spiritual* foundation for a true thanksgiving, the Psalmist now passes to the mention of *temporal* mercies, yet, possibly, all along with an undertone of spiritual meaning. God healeth all diseases, redeemeth the life from death, ministers to the healthful appetite with good things, makes his child strong and

vigorous as the eagle. It would be well for us if we might get back into the old Hebrew habit of referring all such familiar blessings *directly* to God. With the progress of science and our increased knowledge of secondary causes, we are often tempted to stop with the secondary causes, instead of going back of them to the First Cause. When we are strong and well, and partaking with hearty relish of God's good things, we are likely, if we think of the matter at all, to think of what our physician has done for us or of the benefit of our vacation season or of our native strength of constitution. It were more becoming for us to say with the Hebrew, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who healeth all thy diseases, who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, and reneweth thy youth like the eagle's." And such association of these benefits directly with God imparts to them a spiritual suggestiveness such as they may well have in this psalm. They are not only pleasant facts, but *types* of spiritual good. He healeth all thy diseases, but the most deadly disease of all is sin. Thy mouth is satisfied with the kindly fruits of the earth, yet man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Thy youth and vigor are renewed like the eagle's, but thou knowest too what it is to be strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man.

And now, through all these things—forgiveness, redeeming, renewing—God is working toward an ulterior purpose. *He crowneth thee.* God's work is not finished in the forgiveness of sins. If a prince were to take a beggar out of the street in order to make him the heir to his throne, would his work be done when he had washed and decently clothed him? No. He must be *trained* for his position. All that kingly power and fatherly love can command must combine to fit him to

be a king. God's design in our redemption is not only to save us from perdition. That result, great as it would be, would be a meagre result of such a work as the incarnation and death of Christ. God means to make something of us, and what that something is Paul tells us: "For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he [the Son] might be the first-born among many brethren," and these brethren he *called* and *justified* and *glorified*; and therefore the redeemed sing to Him who not only washed them from their sins, but also made them *kings* and *priests*. You remember that wonderful vision of Zechariah, in which Joshua stands before the judgment-seat of God confronting Satan as his accuser; and while the Judge says Joshua is only "a brand plucked from the burning," we hear him saying also, "Take away his filthy garments; clothe him with change of raiment; set a fair mitre on his head, the badge of the priesthood." And so it is true that the life of a forgiven son of God is a process of training for a crown. The work begun in forgiveness is crowned with that crown of loving-kindness and mercy which makes a king and a priest out of a rebel and a prodigal.

Yes, of loving-kindness and tender mercy; for that crown will furnish him who shall wear it no cause for boasting. It is a crown of mercy, not of merit. The Psalmist does not leave that thought with this mere hint; he enlarges upon it. We have not been dealt with according to our sins nor rewarded after our iniquities. There have been transgressions to be removed; there have been native weakness and frailty to be dealt with. He remembereth that we are dust. As for frail man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth; for the wind passeth over it and it is gone. Frail

and sinful, we are subjects for mercy only ; but this gives the Psalmist an opening to dilate upon the compassion of God in a manner adapted to stir our gratitude to its depths. That feeble frame of ours, he knoweth it. What an emphasis that truth acquires as we learn through the gospel how God, manifest in the flesh, knew our human weakness *experimentally* ! how in the days of his flesh he poured out strong cries and tears ! how he is touched not only with the *knowledge*, but with the *feeling*, of our infirmities ! We are dust, but he takes up the shifting dust tenderly into the hollow of his hand with a Father's pity, and while we change and chafe and repent and sin, "the mercy of the Lord is *from everlasting to everlasting* upon them that fear him."

Only, we must not presume even upon such tender mercy as that. The divine nature has a capacity for wrath as well as for tenderness. His tenderness would be worth little were it not the outgrowth of a holiness which recoils from sin ; and therefore we are warned that he will not always chide nor keep his anger for ever ; and the warning is emphasized by a reference to the history of that people to whom he made known his ways, on whom he lavished his mercies, yet who, by their persistent rebelliousness, learned the fearful meaning of his wrath.

And as we reach the close of the psalm we find its keynote struck again. It is a psalm of thanksgiving, but it tells us that *true* thanksgiving can be only within the sphere of God's accepted sovereignty, from the standpoint of voluntary allegiance to him. The foundation of all thanksgiving is that God reigns—the foundation of our *individual* thanksgiving is that God is *our* King. The best thing in any man's life—in other words, his highest cause of gratitude—is that he is under God's

dominion, in “the kingdom of God,” not only a subject, but a son and heir, of Him who has all power in heaven and earth; and with this thought in his heart we can understand why the Psalmist rounds his thanksgiving anthem with this magnificent ascription of dominion: “The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul.”

FOURTH QUARTER.

SOLOMON'S SUCCEEDING DAVID.

BY THE REV. ARTHUR T. PIERSON, D.D.

Oct. 5.—1 Kings 1: 22-35.

THIS introductory lesson of the new quarter presents before us the last of those three equal reigns, of forty years each, which seem to be typical of the three dispensations: the Hebrew Church with its apostasy; the Christian Church during its militant period; and the millennial reign with its triumphant glory.

If Solomon was thus the type of the “Prince of Peace,” the fact that he ascended his throne only by displacing an usurper may find its correspondence in the usurpation of authority over this world, Christ’s rightful realm, by the Prince of Darkness. Yet how sure stands the unchanging word, “I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion”!

This first book of Kings opens with David, now an old man, past threescore years and ten. The Jews at this time were not long lived; no Jewish monarch after David, save only Solomon and Manasseh, exceeded sixty years, and the feeble condition of the Psalm-king naturally and necessarily raised the question of a successor.

Adonijah, who is mentioned fourth among David's sons, as his mother, Haggith, is fourth among David's wives, was a curious compound of physical beauty and grace with boundless conceit and impudence, arrogance and ambition. He was a spoiled child: we are quaintly told in this chapter that "his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" The connection in which these words stand leaves no doubt that they are meant to censure his royal sire for excessive parental indulgence and to suggest a philosophy of his unfilial conduct and character.

Of his mother, Haggith, we get no glimpse, except as the record reveals that at Hebron, not long after Absalom's birth, she became the mother of this her only child, Adonijah. Her name in the Hebrew tongue means *dancer*, and she was probably a gay, light, unprincipled woman, lacking both intellectual force and moral depth of character; she was probably also a very beautiful woman, toward whom David was drawn rather by the capricious impulses of his ardent and passionate nature than by those profounder emotions whose root lies in thorough respect and rational love.

This son certainly resembled this probable portrait of his mother. He was a "goodly man;" that is, of attractive personal presence—what, in our corruption of pure English, we would call a "handsome man." Yet his youthful passions were stronger than his principles, and his impulses trampled upon his convictions. As often happens in such cases, this son, who by reason of his mother's laxity and his own waywardness, needed a father's restraint the more, was subject to no parental authority or discipline whatever and under no sceptre of family government.

He was spoiled by a parental indulgence that verged

on indifference. He was a "child left to himself," and the proverb proved true, for he brought not only "his mother," but his father, "to shame." From birth his father had given him no occasion for displeasure or pain even by inquiring into his course. He was, like Absalom, of an imperious temper, doted upon because of his exterior graces and accomplishments, and, like him, left to his own wayward choices and wicked courses till he ended in self-ruin. Adonijah, like his mother, may have had much beauty of person and grace of motion, but neither intellectual culture nor moral merit: his excellence lay more in lithe limbs than in trained faculties or manly virtues.

His ambition was reckless. Ordinarily, however much the favorite of his father, he could not have aspired to succeed him on the throne, for Amnon, Chileab and Absalom would each in turn prefer the claim of primogeniture; but the death of these three elder brothers left Adonijah the eldest living son, and therefore a claimant to the royal succession. The throne was, however, pledged to Solomon, his younger brother, a child of promise, "beloved of the Lord," and better qualified every way for a wise and just ruler. Adonijah was too much like Absalom in appearance and character, as afterward in career, to take the sceptre of empire in his hand. It was a divine foresight that shut him out from a throne which otherwise he would have inherited and disgraced.

Adonijah's ambition was not to be so easily thwarted. He saw with secret exultation the visible and rapid decline of his father's strength, and that the time had come to seize by force a crown which he could not secure by favor or procure by merit. He equipped himself in royal state, with cavalry, infantry and chariots, somewhat as

Absalom had done before him, and by practicing the arts of the demagogue gained over to his side Joab, Abiathar and many other adherents among the captains of the royal army, whom he invited, with all the princes except Solomon, to a sacrificial feast, and then, in open revolt, claimed the crown of his yet living sire.

For all this David had himself to blame. The neck that had felt no check-rein of parental discipline had grown strong and stiff with abandoned and reckless selfishness. Adonijah was now between thirty and forty years old, and the passions which had never been thwarted had developed him into a monster of filial ingratitude and recklessness.

Nathan the prophet brought to Bathsheba the news of Adonijah's assumption of royal dignities, and of the danger which she and Solomon would incur in case of his successful usurpation. Oriental customs would allow Adonijah to put Solomon to death as a rival claimant to the throne, and Bathsheba might share his fate, as Cleopatra, widow of Philip of Macedon, and Roxana, widow of Alexander the Great, were involved in the tragic doom of their respective sons, Caranus and Alexander.

Bathsheba in alarm at once sought the audience of the king, and, apprising him of this flagrant act of rebellion, respectfully reminded him of his royal pledge. While she was yet speaking Nathan came in to confirm her words, and in accordance with Oriental notions of propriety she retired, as he also retired when she was recalled. The question of Nathan should be read as an affirmation: "Thou hast said, Adonijah shall reign after me," etc. The prophet speaks as though Adonijah's act were authorized by his father's word—a delicate way of avoiding a direct accusation of the son and yet of drawing from the king a disclaimer. He acquainted the king

with the details of this conspiracy, the sacrificial feast and the train of adherents following the rebel prince.

Bathsheba was recalled to the royal presence, and the oath that Solomon should sit upon the throne was renewed and ratified; not only so, but David pledged himself to establish him that very day in the seat of empire. Bathsheba's profound obeisance reminds us of the Assyrian sculptures, which represent ambassadors as bowing before a monarch till their faces touch the ground.

The king summons Zadok the high priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah captain of the body-guard, to show the people that the proceedings were approved and directed by royal decree. They are enjoined to take the king's own mule, place Solomon thereon and bring him down to Gihon—supposed to be the ancient name of the valley that ran between the temple hill and modern Zion, and now known as the Tyropœum. Mules were used in connection with great dignitaries: to ride on the king's mule without his permission was a capital crime, and to place Solomon on the king's mule was therefore another sign of royal sanction.

At Gihon, Zadok and Nathan anointed Solomon with the holy oil and announced him as king. The blowing of the sacred trumpets and the usual formula, "God save the king!" completed the inaugural ceremonies; and so Solomon began his prosperous and glorious reign.

Adonijah, knowing that his treason had forfeited his life, deserted by his followers, fled to the sanctuary and took refuge at the horns of the altar. Solomon dismissed him with a word of warning, pardoning him on condition that he should show himself a worthy man, but admonishing him that if further wickedness were found in him he should die.

After David's death Adonijah bethought himself of

another way in which he might hope in time to ascend the throne now occupied by Solomon. In Oriental courts to possess the wife or even concubine of a deceased king was held to imply an aim at his throne and a claim upon the kingdom. Encouraged by the host of adherents that had flocked to his standard, he schemed to secure, through the intercession of Bathsheba, Abishag, who had been the wife of David's old age. For this second act of constructive treason he was put to death; and so we take leave of one of the two main characters that fill the field of this lesson.

Let us not forget the lesson's moral, which touches both parents and children. Parental authority and filial obedience are among God's unchanging decrees. A divine curse for ever alienated from Eli's house the sacred privilege of the priesthood; and this is the ground of the curse: "Because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Yet he did inquire into their conduct and severely rebuked it, and so was a better father than David, who did not even investigate Adonijah's course. How grand is the contrast of Abraham, who *commanded* his children and his household after him to do justice and judgment!

There may be an indulgence which is innocent. To deny to a child the gratification of a proper and natural desire whose indulgence would work no harm to the child nor injustice to others may be unjust; capricious refusal may provoke to wrath a child who is disposed to obedience, and stir up mischief, if not malice. But promiscuous indulgence leaves children to grow up selfish, sensual and reckless. One of the laws of the Mosaic code required every builder of a house to put a battlement around the roof; and that battlement, in the building

of the household, is *parental law*. Where that exists a child falls into ruin only as he climbs over the battlement.

Solomon has always been regarded as the type of the Messiah, God's own Prince of Peace. To him the kingdom is pledged by the sure word and immutable oath of Him who cannot lie nor repent. The god of this world, like Absalom and Adonijah, may attempt to usurp, and for a time may even hold, the kingdom, but the day is coming when the triumphant trumpets will blow and the shout ascend from armies in heaven and on earth, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." For this throne of world-wide empire Jesus has already received his anointing. "Christ" means "anointed one," he on whom God's chrism has come. The holy oil, compounded according to a divinely prescribed formula, was used in setting apart prophets, priests and kings. But what an anointing was that when God broke his alabaster flask of very precious ointment and poured it on his own Son, the Prophet of prophets, Priest of priests, King of kings! The Holy Spirit had been given so sparingly to the children of men before Christ came that John says the "*Holy Ghost was not yet*" (John 7:39); but God gave not "the Spirit by measure" when he anointed the Christ. All the wealth of his wisdom, power, love, grace was lavished upon Jesus in one great outpouring, and so even now the "whole house is filled with the odor." The fragrance of that anointing reaches even to us, and we are made partakers of the Holy Ghost—*Christ-ians*.

Without pressing this lesson to the extreme of a fanciful typical interpretation, we may lawfully find in it illustrations of some most important truths:

(1.) First of all, the *secret of prevailing prayer*. Bathsheba went before King David with confidence, for he had given his royal word of promise : "Surely Solomon thy son shall sit on my throne." There was no presumption in her plea ; she was emboldened by the king's word : it was the confidence and courage of faith. And so she got her request, and the answer was immediate as well as sure : "Even so will I certainly do this day." And yet David was only a poor, fallible mortal, whose old age was upon him, and who, in the capricious whims and moods of a second childhood, might repent of his pledge or by failing memory forget that he had made it.

What is our encouragement in prayer ? The promise of the immutable God. No capricious moods make him liable to repent or change his mind ; no old age and failing faculties render him liable to forget. We have to do with the eternal, unchanging God, whose word is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. There he sits on the throne of grace, and always ready to give the suppliant soul audience. Let us come boldly and present our plea. If unbelief hinders the freedom of our approach and the nearness of our access, we have only to fill our minds with the promises to prayerful souls, and courageously confront our Father with his own word, "*Thou hast said.*" These multiplied, varied, unmistakable promises are the very planks out of which, laid side by side, matched in holy unity of one divine purpose, and driven together by the importunity and earnestness of the disciple, we frame the platform on which we kneel to pour out our souls unto God.

Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai, "Write ye also for the Jews as it liketh you in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring ; for the writing which is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's ring

may no man reverse." So God says to the believer, "Ask what thou wilt in the name of Jesus." John expresses "the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; and, if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." The disciple who collates and compares the promises of God given expressly to encourage believing prayer will be overwhelmed with their multitude, magnitude and magnificence.*

These promises it is our duty and privilege to plead before God. They are our arguments with which to convince and persuade the prayer-hearing God. He is always ready to be judged "out of his own mouth." This is the logic of importunity: "*Thou hast said;*" and it is the grandest of all logic, for there is but one step from premises to irresistible conclusion. He who knows how to plead God's own changeless word has his hold on the horns of Heaven's altar, and nothing can loosen his hold: the blessing is always sure, and generally speedy.

(2.) A second illustration may be gathered from this lesson as to the *providence of God* overruling the evil designs of men and accomplishing his purposes. Everything seemed against Solomon when Adonijah, surrounded by his fellow-conspirators, was saluted as king. His throne was at risk, and even his life was in peril. But

* We venture to subjoin a few Scripture texts, arranged in the order of a climax, which prayerful souls will do well to study devoutly: Heb. 11:6; James 1:5-7; 1 John 5:10; Matt. 7:7; Eph. 3:20; Heb. 4:15, 16; Matt. 6:7, 8; Heb. 4:13; Ps. 66:18, 19; Mark 10:51, 52; James 5:16-18; Jer. 29:13; Hos. 12:4-6; Luke 18:1-8; Rom. 8:26, 27; Ps. 78:41; Matt. 13:58; Mark 6:5, 6; John 15:7; John 16:23-27; Matt. 9:28, 29; Matt. 21:22; Mark 9:22-24; Mark 11:22-24; Matt. 17:19-21; 1 John 5:14, 15; Jer. 14:21; Matt. 18:19.

there was an old man, not yet dead, in whose feeble hands the sceptre still rested, and who had sworn that Solomon should be heir to the kingdom. A few words spoken by him unseated the usurper, dispersed his minions and placed the child of promise upon the throne.

How often "all things" seem against us, while "all things work together for our good." The god of this world has usurped the kingdom, and a host of followers rally round his standard. We look through the ages, and we see

"Right for ever on the scaffold, Wrong for ever on the throne;
But that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown
Standeth God amid the shadows, keeping watch above his own."

He holds Satan and all his adherents in derision. He has not surrendered the sceptre, and will give the kingdom in due time into the hands of his anointed Son; and he shall reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet, and with him the saints shall share the kingdom. The apparent successes of the god of this world in seizing the reins of empire and oppressing the saints of the Most High shall make his ultimate defeat only the more overwhelming, complete and final.

It is a sublime thought that God is patient because he is eternal; he is only waiting till the fullness of time shall come. Then the word shall go forth, and the anointed King shall ride in triumph to ascend his millennial throne. Satan shall be overwhelmed, chained and finally cast with all his angels and agents into the lake of fire; and even Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed.

Woe in that day to those who have attached themselves to his standard, who have lent their influence to sustain the cause of the doomed usurper! Rocks and moun-

tains, should they fall upon them, could not hide them from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

Would it not be well for us to consider to-day on whose side we are standing? Here are the ranks of Satan with glittering banners and gleaming weapons; they embrace much of the power, wealth, greatness, learning and glory of a wicked world; they are bold, defiant, desperate. Confronting these formidable hosts is a humble band of disciples, whose weapons of warfare are not "carnal," yet "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." In these ranks are the despised poor, unlearned, ignorant and ignobly born. But they are "heirs of the kingdom," for they belong to Christ. Their lines reach round the world and far back into the dim distance of the centuries, for a noble band of apostles, prophets and martyrs form the van of this great host.

On which side do we belong? To Adonijah the usurper or Solomon the king? Even children may take their place on one side or the other, following in the train of the great adversary, or, thronging the path of the meek and lowly Jesus, fill the air with their hosannas. What a blessing may be wrapped in this lesson, if we may so teach it, that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God shall perfect his praise!

DAVID'S CHARGE TO SOLOMON.

BY THE REV. S. J. WILSON, D. D.

Oct. 12.—1 Chron. 22:16.

THE charge of David to his son Solomon has respect to, and gathers force from—

I. The Past; II. The Present; and III. The Future.

I. It gathers force and solemnity from the past.

So far as privilege and responsibility are concerned, no one can live in the present dissociated from the past. The present is what it is on account of and in its connection with the past. “The iniquity of the fathers is visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, and mercy is shown unto thousands of them that love God and keep his commandments.” Blessings are inherited and the evil effects of sin are entailed. Each soul lives in the light or in the shadow of the past. So upon the life and conscience of Solomon were concentrated in this charge the considerations and responsibilities which arise out of—

(a.) *The Relations of the Family Covenant.*—The covenant includes the children. “David had it in his heart to build an house unto the name of the Lord.” This was denied him, because he had been a man of war, but at the same time he was promised a son, who in an age of peace should execute the design of his father. Solomon was a son of promise, a son of the covenant. It was

by no accident he occupied the position which he did. According to divine appointment he had come to that position, and along the channel of the divine covenant had flowed into his life the blessings which he enjoyed, and along the same channel had come the responsibilities which he was to assume. "The Lord chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds, from the sheepright, from following the sheep, to be ruler over Israel" (2 Sam. 7:8; Ps. 78:70, 71). The promises and blessings are transmitted in the line of the covenant from father to son. David can go to sleep with his fathers in peace, having the assurance from the Lord concerning Solomon: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son;" "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee." The plans and purposes of Solomon, therefore, were not projected on the shifting policies of men, but upon the eternal purpose of Jehovah, the "sure mercies of David."

Another consideration drawn from the past was—

(b.) *The Influence of Parental Example.*—David was not only great as a ruler, but he really organized the kingdom over which he ruled. Saul as king only beat back the enemies of the nation and gave to the people the consciousness of unity and power. The virtue of the example of David did not consist so much in the greatness of his achievements as in the purity of his patriotism, the singleness of his purpose, his loyalty to Jehovah, the heroism of his faith, the unselfishness of his aims and his enthusiasm in his work. And these elements of his character come out in their best form in his devotion to the worship of Jehovah, in his desires and plans and purposes with respect to the house of the Lord. When established on his throne he rested not until the ark of the covenant had been brought to Jeru-

salem; and when the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies he was unwilling to dwell in an house of cedar while the ark of God dwelt within curtains. In all his measures and enterprises he had as his supreme and ultimate aim the glory of God and the purity of his worship. The bond of union for the nation was the practical acknowledgment of the supremacy and providence of Jehovah. Just in proportion as the nation remained loyal to Jehovah would it fulfill its mission and destiny. In the policy of David, therefore, there were no small, narrow, mean, selfish aims. The least as well as the greatest of his undertakings had respect to the general interests of the kingdom of God. His plans merged with the plans of Jehovah. Hence his heart overflowed in thankfulness, and in his psalms the Church took up the strain and carries it on through the generations. To Solomon such a parental example was a richer legacy than the crown and the kingdom. The force of this example added its weight to the solemnity of the charge.

Encouragement in the assumption of these great responsibilities was drawn from—

(c.) *The Divine Faithfulness.*—The Lord had promised that Solomon should build the temple, and that was sufficient to satisfy the mind of David. With him a thing promised of the Lord was equivalent to the fact accomplished. Upon no truth, either in praise or in prayer, did David more frequently and fondly dwell than upon the doctrine of the divine faithfulness. All his own life was a vivid and thrilling chapter in illustration of the subject, and beyond that the history of his nation from the migration of Abram from Ur of the Chaldees, and from the deliverance from Egyptian bondage, was an inexhaustible source of material on the same subject.

The building of the temple by Solomon was not a mere political scheme; it was not an enterprise projected by a fond father in behalf of his son. Nor was the duty urged upon Solomon from this point of view. The responsibility was urged because of the purpose and promise of Jehovah. The Lord purposed it and had undertaken it, and therefore he would give success to the agents and instruments which he employed for the execution of his purpose. David manifestly had no difficulty in reconciling the divine purpose and human free agency. By the divine purpose the liberty or contingency of second causes is not taken away, but rather established. The divine purpose and the divine faithfulness are the grounds and reasons for high and noble action, and are, at the same time, the source of encouragement and assurance of success.

II. The charge has respect to the present.

From the present several motives and encouragements are drawn. The first of these is founded in the fact that—

(a.) Problems have been solved, paths of duty have been made clear, and avenues of effort and usefulness have been opened up.

Many problems attended the earlier ages of the chosen people. Through an imperfect conquest of the land of Canaan many precious interests had been put in jeopardy. During the time of the judges the union between the tribes had been almost dissolved, and anarchy at times prevailed. The ark of the covenant for a time was in the hands of the Philistines, and for a time in retirement in the house of Obed-edom. There was no central sanctuary. "The Lord had not yet chosen a place out of all the tribes to put his name there" (Deut. 12:5.) Several weighty problems must be solved before such a charge

as is here recorded could have been given or received. The land must be conquered, enemies must be subdued, the stronghold of the Jebusites must be captured and held; there must be a united nation, a consolidated kingdom, and a king who had not been a man of war. Through many conspiring providences events had reached a point at which the great work could be undertaken. The rich fruits of centuries of trial and suffering were enjoyed by Solomon. Without these centuries he as a king would have been impossible, and his work would likewise have been impossible. Thus the past, with its struggles, its battles, its strivings, its victories and defeats, has laid rich results at our feet, and has opened for us clear paths and wide fields of effort, and has put into our hands agencies and instrumentalities for good of which our fathers never dreamed.

(b.) The present was made rich in material which had been prepared and laid up in the past.

David made extensive and expensive preparations for the building of the temple. He had amassed gold, silver, brass, iron, timber and stone. He had also engaged "workmen ; hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work." That is, he had engaged common laborers, carpenters, stone-masons and skilled artificers. He had commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon in the work. So that not only had difficulties been removed and fields of action cleared, but comprehensive and appropriate material and means had been prepared for the undertaking and carrying forward of the work. Solomon entered upon the work with the accumulated resources and with the gathered enthusiasm of many generations. The simplest elements of his success had been the dear purchase of agonies and tears and of "strivings unto blood. He

would have been utterly insensible if he had not felt the tremendous force of such motives as these; and if such considerations had weight with Solomon, much more should they have weight with us. In this sense the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than Solomon. For this generation not only has God opened up clear fields and plain paths, but he has laid ready to our hands a royal wealth of means, resources and instrumentalities prepared and adapted to the conquest of the world for Christ, as the material made ready by David was adapted to the building of the temple.

(c.) These preparations brought within the reach of Solomon opportunities such as had been enjoyed by no one before him—opportunities which were fraught with possibilities of lasting and universal good.

The opportunity which David so much desired for himself came to Solomon unsought; but, having come, the responsibilities connected with it could not be evaded, and all that which through generations had contributed to make the opportunity added to the weight of the responsibility. By the labors, sacrifices and blood of prophets and kings this opportunity had been made. The wars of David, by which peace had been purchased, rendered it impossible for him to perform the work; so that the very services which made the opportunity for the son excluded the father from actual participation in the work. The magnitude of the opportunity is enhanced when we take into view the objects to be gained by the building of the temple. It was to centralize the worship of Jehovah, to unite the nation—by the sacrificial ritual to prepare the chosen people and the world for the coming of Christ, and thus to prepare the way for the kingdom of God in the earth.

The opening of fields, the preparation of means and

material, create opportunities. Providence has created for every Christian greater spiritual opportunities than King Solomon enjoyed, and the responsibilities arising out of these opportunities are solemn and urgent. The opportunity of winning a soul for Christ has in it the prayers and tears and cries and agonies of martyrs and confessors—ay! has it in the agony and blood of the Son of God.

(d.) All these motives, arguments and considerations, drawn from the past and the present, unite in a resistless appeal for action: "*Arise and be doing.*"

All the voices and influences of the past and present unite in that appeal. As we inherit our blessings and opportunities from the past, so we owe service and loyalty to the present. We occupy our place in the march of events and forces. We inherit the promises. Let us understand our historical position. The promises that were made to Abraham are ours; the bow in the cloud is to us the token of more than the Noachian covenant; the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush is ours. We are heirs to all the promises of former dispensations. Nothing in these dispensations has been lost, but all has been conserved, transformed, carried up and forward into higher and fuller forms. The yearnings and desires and aspirations of patriarchs, kings, and prophets have passed into fact, into vision, into experience and possession, so that we inherit all the wealth of the promises and covenants and achievements of former dispensations.

And this is true as respects our faith, and it is no less true as respects our work. Our labor in the Lord is not in vain, and cannot be in vain, because no force is lost. Every particle of energy is conserved, and works in a divinely organized system. An act for God is not, therefore, an isolated act, but derives leverage and mo-

mentum from all the past. What we do for the Lord goes into the system and cannot be in vain. All the privileges and advantages which come to us from the past are reasons and arguments for earnest action, and the momentum and leverage which our actions gain in this way furnish encouragement and stimulus for us in our work. "*Arise, therefore, and be doing.*" All the voices of the past and the present unite in that appeal.

III. The charge has respect to the future.

(a.) For encouragement in the great undertaking Solomon has the promise of the divine presence and blessing. With that presence and blessing the child of God need have no fear for the issue in any enterprise undertaken for the glory of Christ. Wisdom and understanding will be given for lowly toil and for daily worries as well as for building temples, establishing kingdoms and administering governments. There is no forgetfulness, no unfaithfulness, with the Lord. He guarantees grace and equipment to all his faithful servants. It was wonderful to David that the Lord had done so great things for him : "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" (2 Sam. 7 : 18). But still more wonderful to him were the promises of the Lord which were yet to be fulfilled : "And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God, but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come." When, however, the promises were made, David had no doubt as to their fulfillment : "Now, my son, the Lord be with thee, and prosper thou, and build the house of the Lord thy God, as he hath said of thee ;" "Only the Lord give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the Lord thy God ; then thou shalt prosper, if thou

takest heed to fulfill the statutes which the Lord charged Moses with concerning Israel. Be strong and of good courage; dread not nor be dismayed" (1 Chron 22: 11-13).

(b.) He was also encouraged in his undertaking by the fact that in the accomplishment of it the desires, hopes and prayers of pious ancestors would be fulfilled.

"David had it in his heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building;" but he was not permitted to carry out this purpose of his, because "he had been a man of war and had shed blood." What a powerful incentive it must have been to Solomon that in everything which he did in the execution of the enterprise he was fulfilling the desires and prayers of his father. A like incentive is operative with us. Anything done by us in the establishment of the kingdom of Christ is fulfilling the desires, prayers and hopes of prophets, apostles and martyrs: "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12: 1).

(c.) And by thus fulfilling the pious desires of godly ancestors Solomon set in operation spiritual agencies which carry down to future ages blessings in ever-widening streams of diffusive beneficence.

His work effected the establishment of the Davidic throne and kingdom, and these typified the throne and kingdom of Christ. The beneficent influences transcended the limits of the covenant nation. Prophecy crystallizes into promise, promise passes into accomplishment, and each fact in the series of accomplishments becomes the starting-point of a more wonderful series of facts.

The shell of political organization and of typical dispensations could not for long contain forces of such expanding vitality. The kingdom and the temple pass away, but the gospel is preached in all lands and the kingdom of Christ is on its way to fill the earth. No force that was here put forth by Solomon was lost or wasted, but all was conserved, and is working yet. In this work there could be no failure, because each act had vital connection with the divine plan, and ten thousand forces added to its efficiency. And what was true of Solomon is now true of the least in the kingdom of heaven.

I close with two remarks by way of application:

(1.) In our work we use materials and agencies which have been prepared by kings, prophets, apostles and martyrs.

Rich accumulations of resources, agencies and appliances, coming to us from former ages and dispensations, are put at our service. All the achievements and improvements of modern science and civilization are available in Christian work. All the appliances of steam and electricity for rapid transit, for the dissemination of knowledge and for bringing the ends of the earth together are the results of preparative processes which have long been in train, and, with all their untold possibilities, are now put at the service of the Church. To no other generation in the course of history have there come such opportunities as have come to ours. The voices of these servants of God, whose toils and tears and blood went in as a part of these prepared resources, and the voice of the Lord Jesus himself, come to us with an emphasis gathered from the ages: "*Arise, therefore, and be doing.*"

(2.) In the kingdom of God there is a place and a sphere for talents and service of all kinds.

David collects material, Solomon puts this material to use; one king makes preparation, another king builds, and the princes of Israel help. The Zidonians and the Tyrians bring cedar-wood; "the hewers and workers of stone and timber" do their part, along with "all manner of cunning men of every manner of work;" there is a place for gold, for silver, for brass, for iron, for timber and stone; there is felling and hewing and cutting which fill the mountains of Lebanon with echoes; and there is the silent growth of the temple on its foundations, without the sound of a hammer upon any of the stones or timbers of it.

So goes up the spiritual temple. In the work there is a place and a task for every one who is willing. Happy is he who has but a nail in that structure!

SOLOMON'S CHOICE.

BY PROF. JAMES EELLS, D. D.

Oct. 19.—1 Kings 3:5-15.

SOLOMON was twenty years old. His father David had died, and he had become king of Israel, when, probably to win favor with the people as well as to express his desire for the favor of God at the beginning of his reign, he went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices on its altar, which was one of the chief high-places for sacrifice in the land. In recognition of this public acknowledgment of his reverence, God came to him in a dream—a mode of communication which he often adopted when wishing to make known any special truth or favor—and, well knowing the feelings of the young king respecting his office, offered him the choice of blessings that might be sought from his hand. Prefacing his request with an argument based on his father's character and the Lord's dealing with him, especially in reference to himself and his designation to the throne, Solomon asked for such qualification for his duties as God would include in the gift of wisdom, his allusion to his father being proof that proper moral as well as intellectual qualities were the burden of his desire.

His prayer was granted, and in addition other brilliant blessings were promised which would render both his wisdom and himself so conspicuous that there should not be any among the kings like unto him all his days. He

was so impressed by the magnitude of these blessings that he was not content to offer his thanksgiving in Gibeon, where he had offered his sacrifices and prayer, but went to Jerusalem, where was placed the ark of the covenant, which was the chief symbol of the presence of Jehovah as the God of the nation, and before it presented his burnt-offerings and peace-offerings and made a feast to all his court.

There are several truths which have eminent illustration in this incident to which we may give attention with profit.

I. God regards with special favor those who honor him.

It is idle to speculate as to whether Solomon would not have received the same blessings if he had not sacrificed and prayed. The fact was, that sacrifice and prayer were the immediate antecedents of the blessings, and are represented as having direct relation to them. Such a fact is sufficient answer to all philosophical objections to prayer, and an emphatic rebuke to those who say it is nonsense to insist that God has any pleasure in our worship and formal expressions of homage. He ordered the construction of the tabernacle and determined the ritual of personal and public service, and his covenant with his ancient people was made to depend on their spirit of obedience and devotion not only, but also on their exhibition of this spirit by which they represented themselves before the nations as the peculiar people of God. The sanctuary and its ordinances have ever been associated with his most gracious displays of favor, from the days when the Shekinah and the ark of the covenant were the symbols of his presence in the Holy Place, to this day, when his Spirit attends with special blessing the means of grace connected with the worship of the Church. His covenant

people, not those who undertake to lead a separate, independent Christian life; the exercises of worship which are made a public testimonial of their consecration and loyalty, not the secret prayers and thoughts which may express the single heart's piety,—are regarded with peculiar pleasure. A large part of the promises are made to the Church, called by various names in the Bible. The most marked manifestations of his presence are granted to those in general who confess God before men and delight to honor him.

II. With proper regard to God's will we may pray for special blessings.

It was not presumption for Solomon to take God at his word. It would have been unpardonable unbelief had he replied to his offer of good that he could not presume to make mention of what was uppermost in his heart. God never trifles. His offers are never to be regarded as only general evidence of a willingness to do us good, but as real invitations that we make known our requests. He may not see that it is always best for us or for the best good of others that our exact petition be granted, but we may be certain that he meant what the words implied when he told the young king, "Ask what I shall give thee." We are not to forget that in his children he inspires the feelings which accord with his will respecting those blessings they desire. No doubt from what he had observed of Solomon's spirit he was assured that he was anxious to prosecute the policy of his father and to achieve the most for the nation as the people of God; and this anxiety he was ready to gratify and reward, while it was not likely that any request would be inconsistent with this desire. In any of us let the desire to glorify God and bless the Church and save men be supreme—be

so dominant that did we know it we would not want any subordinate desire to be gratified if not in harmony with this as seen by God ; and he will say to us, " Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." There is proof enough that our Father is pleased to gratify the wishes of his children, and it is no pleasure to him that they pray only in vague and indefinite generalities. The very idea of the relationship forbids such prayer ; the idea of prayer itself is opposed to such expressions of desire. No child ever asks a parent for good in such terms, but the wish that is most clearly defined in the heart has the first place in request, while the confidence reposed in the love and wisdom of the parent assumes that he will exercise his judgment as to whether the wish can wisely be heeded. The point is this : that there is no truth in the sentiment that true prayer is only a state—that answers to prayer can only be the execution of general laws and purposes in such a manner as this state indicates. Prayer is specific, relates to providence rather than law, or rather relates to the providential control and execution of law ; and the child of God may know that he does not pray in vain.

III. We may make the experience of others, when wisely studied, a plea for good to be granted to ourselves.

Solomon made mention of David's life and reign as having been pleasing to God, and of God's great mercy to him, and urged this as proof that a purpose to be upright may become a ground of hope, since He who does not change will grant favor always when the required conditions are fulfilled. The faithfulness of God is the real stimulus to prayer. We may feel our need, yet have no assurance of supply. We may see that great good would be gained to others were our prayers answered,

yet fail to have confidence that the answer will come. But when we can plead an instance in which another situated like ourselves has been blessed, we can be sure that if we have his spirit God will bestow like good on us. In the same way we may cultivate confidence by reference to our own past experience. David remembered his deliverance from the lion and the bear, and this enabled him to go out to meet Goliath, exclaiming, "This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel." It is a constant occasion for encouragement to beings so weak in faith as we are that God not only gives us promises, but instances in which they have been fulfilled; that he not only lays commands upon us, but points to proofs that obedience will be gain; that he not only tells us to pray, but quotes men who did not pray in vain; and then urges us by all this concrete testimony to believe and serve and pray. His father's example and history made Solomon strong and brave in many an emergency, for it taught him that he could have God on his side if he would do what God approved. We often need this assurance. We are tempted to doubt whether we can be blessed, whether our prayers will be of any avail. We often limit the grace which others have experienced in its application to ourselves. On the contrary, that they have received all they needed should cause us to come boldly to the throne of grace, and any past favor shown to us should cause us to say, in the confident earnestness of our supplication, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

IV. Blessings incomplete in their nature may be pressed as an argument in prayer for their completion.

In David's dying charge to his son he reminded him of God's declaration to himself: "If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth, with all their heart and all their soul, there shall not fail thee a man on the throne of Israel." Solomon made this declaration the basis of his plea with God in this interview. In fulfillment of it he had been brought to the throne, notwithstanding his youth and his confessed inability to meet its demands. This fact was a reason why all should be granted him that might render his reign profitable to the people and acceptable to God. A large part of Christian work is in progress, the execution of plans which require time and persistent toil. We need not fear lest God will weary of co-operation in such work. On the contrary, the fact that he has blessed missions among the heathen or among the destitute and vicious population of a city for years, or Sabbath-school instruction in the early years of children, or parental faithfulness in complying with the conditions of the covenant during the early history of a family, may be a kind of warrant that he will not abandon what has had his favor for a time, and may be urged as a reason why he should continue to be gracious, since there is an implied promise in the good already bestowed. We often need the cheering effect of this truth that we may not be weary in well-doing. We labor and pray and hope, but see only partial results, and fear that God has forsaken us in his service, notwithstanding we cannot doubt that he did set his seal on our labors for a time. Our faith and zeal should be excited by the assurance that he never forsakes the work of his own hands, and we may look upon that seal as the guarantee that he will prosecute to the end what he evidently purposed in the beginning. "The foundation of God standeth sure," and that he has laid

the foundation becomes a prophecy of the superstructure, large or small, which shall stand on it. That we are called to his service does not release us from responsibility, but it does render it sure that if we are earnest we shall not fail of his kingdom and glory. As to anything and everything concerning which we are permitted to be workers together with God, we may build hope of success on past help received, and look for answers to prayer along the line of answers already granted. So did Solomon, and he was not disappointed.

V. Consciousness, and even confession, of inability to perform duty may become a further warrant for help from God when the duty is clearly assigned by him.

The young king made known his conviction in the words, "I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in," expecting that, since God had placed him on the throne in the furtherance of his own plan, this feeling of incapacity would call mightily upon him for the aid without which Solomon could have no hope of success. The same conviction oppresses many a Christian whom God has called to do work in the different departments of his service. This should not cause him to faint or despair or retire, but should rouse him to greater confidence in prayer while he resolves to stand in the place assigned him. No one knows how weak he is so well as does God; and the weakest was given his position with this knowledge prominent in the judgment which selected him for it. That he feels it should compel him to feel that he must be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might—should teach him the necessity for prayer, and render him humble while he is faithful. There is danger in two directions when duty is contemplated: we may be self-sufficient and undertake to perform it in our own

strength, or we may be overborne by its weight and decline to attempt its performance. Obedience, in its proper spirit, accepts the help of God in answer to prayer, and will not hesitate, whatever may be the path, if clear indications point it out as the path ordained for our feet. As it was not presumption for Solomon to take God at his word when invited to do so, so it was not presumption for him to take the place God had promised to give him because he knew he could not fulfill its obligations alone. The summons to the station contained a pledge of aid in the discharge of these obligations, and the only question to be determined was whether the summons really came from God.

VI. God does not content himself with granting simply what we ask when we have the spirit he approves.

His answer to Solomon's prayer was: "Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days." It is safe to trust our Father, more than some of us are wont to think, as to the good things which may make us happy, and thus add to our usefulness, when we have shown that we are first desirous to be useful in obedience to his will. He loves his children, and is pleased to give them tokens of his love. They are not always in the form of riches and honor, for these may not be so important to us as they are to kings, but "he will give us above all that we ask or think" of those things which he sees are most important and valuable

for us, all our highest interests being considered. How often does he bestow joy unspeakable in connection with the grace sufficient to enable us to perform our duty! How often does he open heaven over us when we humbly and patiently walk through the valley of trial which he ordains for our pilgrimage! How often does he magnify the little he helps us to gather from fields we are constrained to cultivate, and then lay this up as our treasure in the skies as he tells the angels that we gathered it! Oh, we do not deal with a Master who keeps exact book-account with us—gives us only just what we need, exacts from us just what should be the proceeds of good bestowed. The “exceeding abundance above” what we ask is the overflowing measure of his love for us; and there is not a servant or a child who does not have a rich experience of this unasked good when he is faithful, which is proof that God rejoices to supply him from the infinite resources, and his wealth of blessings shall prove that it is not a vain thing to serve the great Lord. “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;” “Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.”

VII. Thanksgiving for answer to prayer should be prominent and in the most positive form of expression.

As was said in the introduction, not content to offer sacrifices which should declare his gratitude in Gibeon, so long as there was a more conspicuous place upon whose altar they might be laid, Solomon went “to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt-offerings and offered peace-offerings, and made a feast to all his servants” or royal court. This repetition is made because of the import-

ance of the truth it teaches and the beauty of the example which is so forcibly presented.

Too many are willing to receive blessings, even in answer to prayer, yet forget to return any worthy thanks to their Giver. A still larger number think it unnecessary to express their thanks in any way that may be observed by others, who by such a manifestation may be led to recognize the Source of all good. The truly grateful heart will not try to find reasons why it is not important to express what is felt; such expression cannot be restrained. Gratitude is the overflow of the full heart, and the more prominent the method the more delighted will be the recipient of the good bestowed.

It was a scene that had to do with the eminence and prosperity of Solomon as a king when in the presence of his court he stood before the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem and acknowledged that to God was praise to be given for the gifts for which he was distinguished; and it may be that judgments less dreadful than that which came on King Herod, amounting at least to the withdrawal of his favor, have been visited on many who have forgotten or declined to give God the glory for their elevation or the blessings they have enjoyed.

These lessons need no further illustration or enforcement, nor are inferences needed to render them more practical. Their application may be varied and universal. We all should seek wisdom from on high, that in our several stations we may make the most of life. Happy are they who not only pray, but remember the wise man's own summary of what we need as he said, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."

THE TEMPLE BUILT.

BY THE REV. HENRY A. NELSON, D.D.

Oct. 26.—1 Kings 6:1-14.

GOD always calls things by their true names. Whatever he calls a thing, a place or an institution, that we may know it to be. To make anything something else than what God has called it is a perversion of it. What he has called it is what he meant it to be—what, therefore, it ought to be. When he said, “Mine house shall be called a house of prayer,” he told the proper use of that house, the true purpose for which he caused it to be built. By “mine house” did Jehovah (speaking by his prophet Isaiah) mean the material edifice built for the worship of him in Jerusalem? If possibly we might otherwise have been in doubt about this, we cannot be since we have Christ’s exposition of it, given in very impressive circumstances and in a very emphatic way. Driving out of that holy place the traders and money-changers whom he found desecrating it with their secular business, he cited this word of the Lord by Isaiah in justification of his severity: “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46).

That temple, which Solomon built and dedicated, which was restored from its desolation in the time of Nehemiah, and which Herod the Great rebuilt, was known to all de-

vout Israelites as the house of God. God by his prophets taught them so to regard it. This Sabbath-school lesson gives account of the original building of this temple by King Solomon. The Golden Text is well chosen: "For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." Our best scholars give us "*all nations*" as a more accurate rendering than "*all people*," and the Revised Version of the New Testament at Mark 11:17 reads, "Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?"

The Golden Text teaches—I. That the temple on Mount Zion was built and furnished to encourage and help the devout intercourse of men with God; II. That it was intended to do this not for one nation only, but for all the nations.

I. Devout intercourse of men with God is PRAYER.

"Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies" (*Westminster Larger Catechism*, p. 178). This definition of prayer was wrought out by an Assembly of devout and studious men after the full light of the completed Bible had been shining for sixteen centuries. It has given instruction and satisfaction to Christian people for more than two hundred years. It is not probable that any Assembly could now be convened which would be able to frame a better definition. In connection with this scriptural teaching about the Lord's house of prayer it is well to study this excellent definition of prayer.

It sets foremost the idea of *desires* which we express to God. This is *petition* or *seeking*. It is obedient compliance with our Lord's instruction: "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be

opened unto you." Our dependence and our needs naturally make this a prominent part of our intercourse or interviews with God. May there not be danger of making it selfishly prominent? The child who shows no disposition to meet or to speak with his parent, except to ask favors, has not the true filial spirit and cannot be satisfactory to the parent. Is it not just so with our Father in heaven? If we have no wish to be with God or to speak to him, except to ask for something which we want, are we his children?

There are some who never try to pray except when they are in some trouble or some danger or some great need. True it is that God encourages us to bring all our needs and all our troubles and all our fears and cares to him. That is good and fatherly in him; that is like any good father. But is it like a good child to have nothing else to say to him—no other occasions for coming to him?

"Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a Friend so faithful,
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
Take it to the Lord in prayer."

The hymn of which this is one stanza is a true "gospel hymn," but I could wish that besides its three stanzas, all of this same tenor, it had another stanza in which we would "take to the Lord" all our joys and hopes and triumphs in the same assurance of his loving sympathy.

Our Catechism speaks of "an *offering up* of our desires." Here is a suggestion of something more than asking or seeking. It hints at the honor we pay to God in thus praying to him. We offer up something supposed

to be acceptable to him. This is not a mistake. In the ancient temple-worship God caused his people's prayers to be symbolized by the smoke of incense, the sweetest possible fragrance that could be devised and secured by the art of the apothecary (Ex. 37:29; Luke 1:8, 9, 10). Could there be a more significant token of the pleasure which his people's prayers give to God? And does not every father and every mother know how God feels about this by the sweetness of being thus sought unto by dear little children? But you know how it sours and spoils all this to have the child come to you in selfish greed instead of in loving and obedient trust. So is it exactly with our heavenly Father. It is only trusting, submissive, unselfish prayer that we can offer up with any good hope of pleasing him. Such prayer will not limit itself to the things which we feel the need of for ourselves—things which will do good to us. The hallowing of God's name, the coming of his kingdom, the fulfillment of his holy will in earth and heaven, take precedence of all requests for our own personal benefit; and it is always to be understood between him and us (if it is not always expressly put into the words of our prayer) that all our desires for personal favors are in subordination to the supreme desire that his name may be honored and his will be done.

When the desires which we offer up in prayer are thus ordered and subordinated there will surely be with them "confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies." We think of the fifty-first Psalm as the Bible model of penitential confession, but the careful reader does not fail to hear the tones of earnest petition and of heartfelt gratitude blending with the deep sub-bass of penitential sorrow. Happy is he who can, from the heart, offer up to God the whole of that fifty-first

Psalm, from its plaintive opening, "Have mercy upon me, O God," to its joyous and hopeful closing, "Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offering and whole burnt-offering; then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar." No multitude of sacrifices, no burnt-offerings of rams and fat of fed beasts, no blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he-goats, at the ancient altar, ever satisfied Jehovah if they were not the true expression of heartfelt penitence and thankful, loving, filial trust. And now, in the simpler forms of our Christian worship, it is sincerity of desire, of confession and of thanks in any honest and decorous utterance of them, which comes up before God as incense and a pure offering.

II. This spiritual fulfillment of what was anciently embodied in the temple with its gorgeous furnishing and impressive ceremonial and priestly ministration is for all mankind.

(1.) This was plainly enough taught in the original declarations concerning the temple which we have in the Old Testament. The text (Isa. 56:7) affirms that Jehovah called his house a house of prayer "for all nations."*

In Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple there was no narrow Jewishness. Notice this generous petition: "Moreover, concerning a stranger that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake (for they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched-out arm), when he shall come and pray toward this house, hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for, that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee,

* The Hebrew is תּוֹעֵדָה, the "peoples" or the "nations."

as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name" (1 Kings 8 : 41-43). The same unselfish spirit breathes in the sixty-seventh Psalm, a song, no doubt, for the temple-worship :

"God be merciful unto us, and bless us ; cause his face to shine upon us [Selah], that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. The nations shall acknowledge thee, O God, the nations shall acknowledge thee—all of them."*

The same large promise concerning the ultimate universal prevalence of the worship which had its seat in Jerusalem was forcibly uttered through the last of the Old-Testament prophets : "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles ;† and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, † saith the Lord of hosts " (Mal. 1 : 11).

(2.) The dispensation which had its local seat at Jerusalem was predestined to be temporary, while the spiritual worship which it taught and temporarily helped was to be permanent and universal. This even pious Israelites were slow to learn, slow to believe. The lesson must needs be taught not only plainly, but severely, terribly. The sentence, "My house shall be called an house of prayer for all nations," "was applicable," says Professor Alexander, "to the material temple while it lasted; but the whole prediction could be verified only after its destruction, when the house of God even upon earth ceased

* I give Professor J. Addison Alexander's version of v. 3. The word תַּעֲמִיד (the "nations") is the same as in our Golden Text.

† "Gentiles" and "heathen" in this verse translate one and the same Hebrew word, נָגֵן.

to be a limited locality and became coextensive with the Church in its enlargement and diffusion."

"The whole prediction" of which the commentator thus speaks is this (vs. 6, 7): "Also the sons of the stranger [*i.e.* foreigners] that join themselves to JEHOVAH, to serve him, and to love the name of JEHOVAH, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant,—even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all nations."

This removal of local limits and barriers was drawing near to its fulfillment while our Lord was in the flesh. "The hour cometh," said he to the woman of Samaria, "when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." . . . "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (John 4:21, 23). Not without human patriotic sadness could Jesus look from Olivet upon the city and temple and foresee and foretell their destruction. He felt a divine pity for the blinded people whose sin exposed them to such national ruin. Yet he looked beyond that horror, and knew that when not one of the huge stones in those marvelous holy buildings should be left upon another, then living stones should be swiftly and securely built into the spiritual temple in which incense should be offered and a pure offering, and which should indeed be "a house of prayer for all the nations." His intimations that all in which the Jews so proudly and so selfishly gloried was about to perish seem to have excited or aggravated the hostility to him which led to his crucifixion, while even those who loved him and were nearest to him failed to understand how that

local and limited dispensation was to have its fulfillment in a dispensation far more glorious, because it should be spiritual, world-wide and eternal.

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Only by visibly perishing from the earth could that glorious temple, and the worship of which it was the seat, fill the wide world with the fruit of holiness of which it was the seed. Nevertheless, to die, to perish, to disappear in the ground,—nature cannot help shrinking from it with horror, no matter what promise there may be of glorious resurrection. Jewish nature was but human nature in its reluctance to accept that divine decree. Yet the Jewish blindness and obstinacy and enmity fulfilled the decree even by means of resisting it: "For they that dwelt at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which were read every sabbath day, fulfilled them in condemning him" (Acts 13 : 27). "The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." The temple on Mount Zion, the joy of the whole earth, was razed to the ground. All restrictions and distinctions that fenced in religious privilege were abolished. The house of God is a house of prayer for all the nations.

Shall we then conclude that now divine worship has no relations to aught that is local and visible? Is there for God's people now no Zion, no Shiloh, no Bethel, no local sanctuary, no visible house of the Lord? More truly may we say that now whatever place the convenience and consent of worshipers appoint and consecrate, there is the house of God.

"Jesus, where'er thy people meet,
There they behold thy mercy-seat;

Where'er they seek thee, thou art found,
And every place is holy ground."

In the destruction of the temple there was no abolishing of the synagogue. The convenient place of meeting for religious worship and religious instruction, wherever the apostles found it existing, to it they first resorted to preach Jesus, proving out of the Scriptures which were read there every Sabbath day that he is the very Christ whom those Scriptures reveal. The synagogue was the type of the Christian church. The church is God's house of prayer for all nations. It is built and consecrated in every city, in every village, in every sufficient district, in which people of Christ build their homes and are bringing up their children. In every such synagogue, meeting-house, sanctuary, the same word of God is read which the child Jesus heard read in the synagogue of Nazareth, and which in the same synagogue the man Jesus read and declared to be fulfilled in himself. In each of these synagogues the same God is worshiped to whom incense was burned in the temple, and whose Shekinah the high priest alone could look on in the Holy of Holies. Now every believer in Christ may draw as near to the invisible mercy-seat as Aaron or his sons.

Ought our worship to be less reverent than that in the ancient temple? In these Christian synagogues ought not attention to the word of God to be as serious and devout as in the Jewish synagogues? Our prayers and our service of song,—ought we not to be as careful that they be true and pure heart-worship as of old they were careful not to offer strange fire or unhallowed incense? Are we keeping our dedicated sanctuaries quite clear of everything which would strike our Lord as unsuitable for his Father's house of prayer?

I have no harsh or sweeping things to say about the

methods which have become common in our sanctuaries or in some of their courts for social improvement and for raising funds for sacred uses. Mainly, I believe, the aim and the motives of those who direct these methods and labor in them are unselfish and truly Christian. But I certainly think that they need careful watching, and that those who watch them carefully will not fail to discover a strong tendency to make the house of God less evidently and less emphatically a house of prayer, a place for devout intercourse with God, than it was designed to be.

Faithfully, carefully, earnestly let us study and adopt our methods and keep our hearts, lest our sanctuaries become places from which no acceptable incense will go up to God, and in which no saving blessing will come down to us.

THE TEMPLE DEDICATED.

BY THE REV. S. J. MCPHERSON, D. D.

Nov. 2.—1 Kings 8 : 22-36.

THE undivided kingdom of Israel reached the zenith of its course in the reign of Solomon. Like Julius Cæsar, David was the military hero and champion of his nation. He extended its territory from Egypt to the Euphrates, and centralized its government on the conquered heights of Jerusalem. But Solomon, the Augustus of Hebrew history, was an organizer and administrator. Jehovah, instead of teaching his hands to war, gave him rather "a wise and an understanding heart," and "both riches and honor," so that he was the greatest king of his day (1 Kings 3 : 12, 13; 4 : 24). These gifts and opportunities naturally made him also the Pericles of his race. His reign was distinguished for its magnificent architecture. As its chief spiritual excellence is found in the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Canticles, the three inspired books which bear his name, so its principal external glory appears in the three greatest edifices which he built—his own house (7 : 1), the house of the forest of Lebanon (7 : 2), and, most of all, the temple of Jehovah. This last has become throughout Christendom the most famous building of antiquity. It was probably the most characteristic product of Solomon's life-work, as it was indeed a natural epitome of the whole Old-Testament system. It was a summary of typology, a climax of

ritualism, a compendious prophecy in stone and cedar. It was the proper fruitage of peace, and hence God had said to David, "Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood" (1 Chron. 28 : 3). It was the exponent of great wealth and fine taste and ample leisure, rather than of a struggling career or of a distinctively spiritual life—the suitable expression of the natural resources of Solomon's age and the luxurious yet religious impulses of Solomon's nature. For seven years the temple was building. Great numbers of stones, laid to their place in such sacred silence as no sound of hammer could be allowed to desecrate, had been laboriously quarried out of those huge subterranean caverns (as is supposed; but see 1 Kings 5 : 17, 18) which the traveler still finds underlying the modern city of Jerusalem. Under the oversight of the skilled Sidonian hewers whom Solomon's friend Hiram, the king of Tyre, sent for that purpose, thousands of "cedar trees, fir trees and algum trees out of Lebanon" (2 Chron. 2 : 8) had been felled by the great levy of Israelites (1 Kings 5 : 13, 14, 15), and conveyed by sea in floats to some port near Jerusalem. A skillful Tyrian had been sent by Hiram to supervise the making of the temple's lavish and gorgeous decorations (2 Chron. 2 : 13, 14). "Thus all the work that Solomon made for the house of the Lord was finished; and Solomon brought in all the things that David his father had dedicated; and the silver, and the gold, and all the instruments put he among the treasures of the house of God" (2 Chron 5 : 1. Cf. 1 Kings 7 : 51).

The preliminary work of building being completed and paid for, the significant ceremonies of the dedication were in order. These were to declare the true object of the temple, and they must consequently be consistent with

previous announcements. Its chief object was to provide a dwelling-place for Jehovah among his chosen people. Of course "heaven and heaven of heavens" could not contain him (1 Kings 8 : 27), yet he graciously consented to dwell among them, to evince his choice of them among the nations of the earth. At the time of the Exodus from Egypt he took up his visible habitation among them in the pillar of a cloud by day, and by night in a pillar of fire (Ex. 13 : 21). At Sinai he specially manifested himself to them as their God, so that even the terrors of that awful time distinguished them as the companions of Jehovah. Throughout the wilderness-wanderings his dwelling-place, "*the tabernacle of the congregation*," was the centre of their camp, for he constantly kept his home amidst them. The temple, replacing the sacred tent, symbolized his permanent abode among them (2 Sam. 7 : 5 ; 1 Kings 8 : 13). As the dwelling-place of God the temple became the peculiar sign and pledge of the theocracy, "*an house for his kingdom*" (2 Chron. 2 : 1). It was the house of the covenant, God and man uniting typically in the ark, as afterward they united really in the person of Jesus Christ. In this dwelling-place Jehovah received and entertained his people. On the one side, he there revealed to them his name, which is always a synonym for his holiness (1 Kings 5 : 5 ; 8 : 16. Cf. Ex. 39 : 30 ; Lev. 11 : 45 ; 20 : 3). Accordingly, the temple was called "*holy*" (Ps. 79 : 1) or a "*sanctuary*" (Ex. 25 : 8), and its two parts were known as "*the holy place*" and "*the holy of holies*." On the other side, Jehovah's dwelling-place was to call forth the worship of Israel (1 Kings 8 : 29, 30). His self-revelations and their prayers and sacrifices therein fulfilled for them his great prophetic promise : "*I will dwell among them ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*"

The dedication of the temple, therefore, which was the principal event of Solomon's reign, expressed the acknowledgment of that building both by Jehovah and by Israel as his earthly dwelling-place. If it was to be a sanctuary consecrated to God's holy name and devoted to his worship, God's presence and Israel's service must be mutually pledged to it.

The exercises of dedication may be divided, merely for the sake of convenient consideration, into four parts. Each part appears to be double, having special reference at one point to Jehovah and at the other to his people Israel. In this connection it may be remarked that there is a noticeable mingling of instruction and worship in all parts of the dedicatory services.

(1) The first part of the ceremony consists of the acts connected with the bringing in of the ark of the covenant of the Lord into the holy of holies, the oracle of the house (vs. 1-11). The human element in this part of the transaction is seen in the solemn procession which removed the ark from Mount Zion, where David left it, to the place made for it by Solomon under the cherubim in the temple on Mount Moriah (vs. 1-9). The divine answer followed at once in the filling of the temple with the cloud of Jehovah's glory (vs. 10, 11).

(2) The second part is composed of Solomon's dedication address (vs. 12-21), directed in its opening utterances to God (vs. 12, 13), and in the remainder to Israel (vs. 14-21).

(3) The third part is made up of Solomon's marvelous prayer offered to God (vs. 22-54), and of his benediction invoked upon the people (vs. 55-61).

(4) The final part combines the stupendous series of dedicatory sacrifices to God (vs. 62-64) and the seven-day feast of dedication for "all Israel" (vs. 65, 66), which

was immediately followed by the annual seven-day feast of tabernacles. (Cf. 2 Chron. 7 : 8-10.)

Each of these parts was essential to the grand design of the dedication. In order to gain a full appreciation of its meaning, one ought to study them all, but we restrict ourselves to the two earlier parts. The first part of the ceremony was the fundamental one: all that followed was supplementary to this. For, on the one hand, it involved the bringing in of the ark, which bore the same relation to the rest of the temple as the kernel of a nut bears to the shell; and, on the other hand, it implied, in the cloud which filled the temple, Jehovah's acceptance of the temple as his residence, and so set the divine seal of success upon the enterprise. With respect to man's share in this chief part of the dedication three points may be noticed here: (1) *The time chosen is significant.* It was in the seventh month, one week before the beginning of the feast of tabernacles and two days before the day of atonement (v. 2; 2 Chron. 7 : 8, 9. Cf. Lev. 23 : 27, 34). It is not difficult to surmise reasons for this choice. Occurring simultaneously with these great annual gatherings, it was a convenient time, and it ensured perhaps a larger attendance of the people. The day of atonement was indeed a day to afflict the soul on account of guilt (Lev. 23 : 27, 28), but it was also the great day of deliverance from sin's bondage, and was chosen for the semi-centennial jubilee (Lev. 25 : 9). The feast of tabernacles was the most joyful festival of the Hebrew year (Deut. 16 : 13-15). It celebrated the gathered harvest and commemorated the forty years of tabernacling in the wilderness. Its two principal thoughts of "harvest-home" and pioneer privations were both peculiarly appropriate to this dedication, for the solid, splendid temple was both the gathered fruit of Israel's previous his-

tory and the most conspicuous contrast with God's dwelling "within curtains" (2 Sam. 7:2). Thus the time chosen, as well as other features of the dedication, plainly shows a disposition to associate the new temple with the old past. Great and beautiful as it is, this temple is, after all, the highest reach of a long process of development. Solomon recognizes the fact that God does not go forward by jumps, and that no age of men therefore can afford to despise the past day of small things. (2) *The personages* lending their hands to the enterprise are significant. These were the king, the elders, the leaders of the tribes, the principal heads of families (v. 1), and "all the men of Israel" (v. 2.) The universal attention to this celebration is greatly emphasized. The king, as representative of the whole people, stands at the head of the list. Then all the representative men of every grade, and finally all the people, are mentioned as taking part. The whole nation rises to meet God, at once welcomed and welcoming. It must have been an occasion of tumultuous delight, as it was of most appropriate devotion, among God's chosen people. (3) *The acts* connected with the placing of the ark are significant. In the main, they are two: There was first the solemn procession, in which priests carried the ark itself, and Levites carried its appurtenances, which had been previously dedicated in the tabernacle. Then, secondly, either while the ark was made to pause in the court before the holy place or while the priests were still advancing with it, the king and congregation were sacrificing numberless sheep and oxen (v. 5). So the whole multitude took an active share in the solemn ceremony, and in the mean time the ark was deposited in the holy of holies beneath the reverent wings of the cherubim. In this act the service reaches its climax, for the ark contained the tables of

stone upon which God's own fingers had inscribed the Ten Commandments. These words of God constituted the secret of the temple's dedication, for they were both his revelation of himself and his claim upon his children.

As to God's active share in this principal part of the dedication only a word need be said. As soon as the ark, the precious casket containing the jewels of God's will, was in place, he visibly overshadowed the inner spaces of the temple with the cloud of his glory. This was a renewal of his token of approval and participation at the dedication of the tabernacle (Ex. 40 : 34, 35). It veiled the terrors of Sinai's law, while it revealed the glory of the gracious covenant-keeping God. Thenceforth the Israelites were to remember that the temple was not empty, but full, and that, too, of the divine glory, which eclipsed all the studied but merely human magnificence with which Solomon had endowed it.

Seeing this strange cloud, Solomon utters the introductory address which forms the second part of the dedicatory exercises. Speaking as if in an involuntary soliloquy in presence of God's cloud of glory, he says, "The Lord *said* that he would dwell in the thick darkness;" and then, seeing with exultation that this "thick darkness" has been brought as God's garment into his temple, he thankfully adds: "I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever." Then, turning his face toward the waiting congregation, he addresses to them a speech which must have seemed to them a benediction. He recounts in outline the history of the origin and growth of the temple, especially mentioning the hindered wish of David to build it, his own great privilege in being permitted to do so, and the crowning fact that the ark of the covenant was within the sacred presence-chamber, the holy of holies.

This dedicated temple of Solomon is a pregnant type.

1. It is a type of Jesus Christ. The architectural magnificence of Solomon's temple but feebly prefigures the perfection of Christ's wonderful person. Solomon's temple was to Israel a symbol of permanence, but Jesus, looking at its second successor, declared that not one stone should be left upon another ; and then, thinking of his own mastery even over death itself, declared, " Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. But he spake of the temple of his body " (John 2 : 19, 20). The temple was the dwelling-place of God; Jesus Christ is God incarnate. The temple was the meeting-place for God and man; Jesus is the divine-human Mediator, and whatsoever we ask in his name we receive (John 16 : 23). The temple was the place for intercession and atonement; Jesus ever liveth to make intercession for us, and he is the sacrificial Lamb whose blood cleanseth us from all sin. The temple contained the ark of the covenant; Jesus has fulfilled all law, and in love he binds all filial souls to the divine Father.

2. Solomon's temple is a type of heaven. It is Jehovah's permanent dwelling-place (1 Kings 8 : 30, 32, etc.).

3. Solomon's temple is a type of every Christian. For the Christian is the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in him, demanding a pure home (1 Cor. 3 : 16, 17).

Thus the glory of Solomon was the temple which bears his name ; the glory of that temple was its typifying of Christ, of his Church and his heaven ; and the glory of Christ, of the Church, even of heaven, is a human life fully consecrated to God in Christ.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON.

BY THE REV. HERVEY D. GANSE.

Nov. 9.—1 Kings 10 : 1-13.

IN Gen. 10 : 28 we read that Joktan, of the family of Shem, had a son Sheba. The descendants of these men inhabited the south-western portion of Arabia, bordering on the Red Sea. The region was and is very beautiful and fertile, well deserving the ancient name of *Arabia Felix*. To the chief kingdom of this region Sheba gave name, as also to a particular city within it. The spelling of the name of both city and kingdom varies a little in the Hebrew, and is varied still more by classical writers, so that "Seba," "Sheba" and "Sabæans" cover the same people. This is not true, however, of the "Seba" named with "Sheba" in the seventy-second Psalm, for that word, while it looks, to our eye, just like the Arabian name above quoted, has in the Hebrew a different appearance and designates an Ethiopian kingdom. Some confusion of these similar names has encouraged the notion of Josephus that the Ethiopian kingdom is spoken of in our lesson. But the great weight of scholarly judgment makes the queen, whose visit we are to study, to have ruled over the Arabian people. Our Lord's description of her as "the queen of the south" does not decide the question, for Ethiopia lay in the same southern direction. Yet it is an interesting coincidence at least that the whole region of the Joktanite Sheba was anciently, as now,

known under the name of "Yemen," "The South." Allusion to that fact might very possibly have been made by Christ, though, since the Gospels give us his discourses in Greek, we are not sure that this word "Yemen," which is Semitic, was used by him. We are sure, however, that the products and commerce of the Arabian Sheba could supply just such gifts as were brought by the queen to the Hebrew king. This would not be true of Ethiopia.

We may settle it, then, that that picturesque caravan which we are to meet at the gates of Jerusalem set out from those "uttermost parts of the earth" where the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea bound the south-western portion of the Arabian Peninsula. Very grateful suggestion both of the products and of the ancient name of the region comes wafted to us on Milton's lines, describing

"Sabæan odors from the spicy shores
Of Araby the Blest."

The journey, at the shortest, could not have covered less than a thousand miles each way. Made, as it was, "with a very great train," it must have been immensely costly, and the provision of camel-loads of spices, together with gold and precious stones, must have demanded an outlay which nothing but the overflowing wealth of an Oriental empire could meet.

The occasion of this long expedition and great expenditure is explained in these words (v. 1): the queen "had heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord," and "she came to prove him with hard questions."

The special way in which the fame of Solomon was brought to her seems to be indicated in the verses imme-

dately preceding our lesson. These describe the fitting out of the joint fleet of Solomon and Hiram at Ezion-Geber, and its success in bringing back gold from Ophir. It is to be noticed, indeed, that this whole account of the queen of Sheba is bound up with the recital concerning these voyages to Ophir and their results. Besides the three verses which introduce our lesson, two in the midst of it (the 11th and 12th) and the two verses which immediately follow it are all concerned with this income of gold from Ophir. If we add to this the fact that in the tenth chapter of Genesis, already quoted, the name of Joktan's son Sheba is immediately followed (v. 29) with the name of another son, Ophir, the argument of those who locate Ophir in Arabia in the vicinity of Sheba will seem to stand very firm. It would be natural that those two sons should leave their posterity and their names upon contiguous territories; it would be natural that the recital concerning Ophir should introduce the brief narration concerning the queen of a neighboring territory, who by that very neighborhood might have come to hear of "the fame of Solomon;" it would be natural, if Ophir and Sheba were near together, that the recital should vibrate from Ophir to Sheba, and then to Ophir, then to Sheba, and back again to Ophir, as we have seen it do. Whereas, if Ophir were as far away from Arabia as many writers have conjectured it to be, such a construction of the narrative would seem to have been almost impossible. These considerations, indeed, do not relieve all the obscurity which hangs over this question of the locality of that ancient source or mart of gold; but at the least they require us to believe that the voyages to Ophir had brought to Sheba and its queen the "fame of Solomon."

This fame she heard as "concerning the name of the

Lord"—that is, of "Jehovah." The meaning of this phrase has been much debated, yet the Hebrew here is the very same that constantly describes the motive which prompted such acts as the building of the temple, the offering of worship, or whatever else was reverently done "to" or "for the name of Jehovah." So that in this place also the same words would seem to indicate a known purpose of Solomon that all the "fame" accruing from his divine gift of wisdom should redound as praise "to the name" of its Bestower. In order to this, it would appear that the gifted king had been careful to make known the supernatural quality of his endowment and the circumstances of its bestowment. (See Lesson of October 19th.) We must now remember that the wisdom which Solomon's "fame" ascribed to him was great enough to demand this supernatural explanation, and that his royal office and magnificence united all the conditions that could set off his wisdom and stimulate wonder. The tidings concerning him which had reached the queen must have presented himself and his court as utter marvels, the sight of which was worth the longest journey. To observe such a king as a guest and an equal had seemed to her an experience worth purchasing at any cost.

It would throw a deep interest into the story if we could persuade ourselves that some earnest desire not only to visit the wise king, but to know and to worship the divine Giver of his wisdom, prompted her journey. But the narrative gives us no clear intimation of such a wish. The intent of her visit is distinctly said to have been "to prove him with hard questions." These "hard questions," therefore, were not deep problems in which she had been perplexed, and which she hoped to have him solve for her. They were the means of "proving"

or "testing" him, not of instructing herself, except as to his ability to meet the test. They were questions to puzzle him with, as the Hebrew intimates.* She had carefully studied them out, ready to be convinced, if he should answer them, that his wisdom was as great as had been described, but apparently not quite sure that her own royal wit might not gain some credit in the encounter.

This narrow purpose of hers of course would not be the measure of God's purpose in sending her or of the Holy Spirit's purpose in making record of her coming. But our only way of arriving at the mind of the Spirit lies through a careful and candid study of just what the Spirit records. True views of Scripture never come by putting our meaning into it, but only by getting God's meaning out of it.

Now, to us it seems hardly possible that a queen and a king whose territories were more than a thousand miles apart would have a meeting, embellished with munificent gifts on both sides, and all for the propounding and solving of "hard questions." But the Orientals were very fond of such enigmas. Samson's riddle illustrates this disposition. Special traditions of Solomon's inclination to such pastime have come down to us in forms that at least are very definite. Tyrian historians preserved accounts of a contest of this sort long sustained by letter between Solomon and Hiram, king of Tyre. As Josephus transmits their story, it leaves Solomon worsted at last by the shrewdness of a Tyrian boy whom Hiram enlisted as his helper. Viewed as history, of course the account is of no value, yet when taken into connection with the importance which Solomon himself

* The Hebrew for "hard questions" here is the very same that Samson uses for "riddle" in Judg. 14:12, *sq.*

attached to the "interpretation" of the "dark sayings" * of "the wise," it may throw some light upon the tests which his visitor meant to employ. Some other traditions which have come to us through Arabian writers assume to detail the particular ways in which the queen attempted to puzzle the Hebrew king. Some of these were not at all of the nature of "hard questions," but rather of tests of his penetration. Here belongs the story of the artificial flowers which Solomon detected by the refusal of bees to alight upon them. Girls dressed as boys and boys dressed as girls were shown him. He required them to wash their faces, and detected the girls by the greater gentleness with which they performed the act. These particulars make up only a part of the tradition, but no feature of it deserves to be considered as illustrative of the actual questions of which the Scripture speaks. What those questions were we have no means of knowing. They were such as she could carry "in her heart" or mind and could propound in words. Whatever they were, he "told her all her questions. There was nothing hid from the king which he told her not."

But now we are by no means to limit our idea of Solomon's display of wisdom to the measure of the queen's questions. A marvelous woman must that queen have been if she could bring with her out of her heathen kingdom any questions that should be more than starting-points to the discourses of a man who had not only been trained from childhood in the revealed truth of God, but was himself the channel of a divine wisdom. The Solomon of his latest and saddest years might have had little to say to her concerning the religion which he had then dishonored, but as yet he had not unlearned the chief of

* The same word again.

all the lessons which he taught, that “the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom;” and if he discoursed to her at all of that, there is the less wonder that even a temporary impression of those great truths should leave “no spirit within her.”

But it was not only from the discourses of Solomon, whatever their subject, that the Arabian queen derived her impression of his greatness. She was astonished at “the house that he had built.” This may have been one inclusive name for the three structures described in ch. 7: 1, 2, 8; namely, “his house,” “the house of the forest of Lebanon”—so called, perhaps, in part, from the cedar employed in it, and in part from the crowd of the cedar pillars, like the trees of a forest—and the house for Pharaoh’s daughter, his queen. All these may have been connected; and their proportions may be judged of by those which are given of the second named. It was a hundred and fifty feet long and forty-five feet high.

She wondered at his daily banquets, the bountiful provision or “meat” for which is described in ch. 4:22. It will be seen that only the amplest “tables” could bear such a load. A host of his “servants” or officers must have been seated to partake of it, and a host of “attendants” almost as great must have stood to serve them. All this, with the splendor of their various “apparel,” the flashing vessels, of gold only (see v. 21 below), borne swiftly about by the “cup-bearers,” made a show of royal magnificence so far surpassing all that his visitor had dreamed of that she gave herself up to helpless wonder.

Another object of admiration she found in “his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord.” Since the palace of Solomon was on one hill and the temple on another, with a very considerable depression, the Tyropœon Valley, between them, it is probable that Solomon

had built a bridge of striking aspect that spanned this ravine and led over from the eastern side of the palace toward the western front of the temple. Such a bridge or causeway would not only be noticeable in itself, but by joining the two magnificent structures of the temple on the one side and the group of palaces on the other it would be the very centre of Solomon's architectural achievements.

Overwhelmed by what she had heard and seen, the queen declared her ecstasy of wonder and delight: "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit, I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice."

To these enthusiastic words she added the gifts which she had brought. Their value was so great that we can hardly conceive of an age in which such presents were possible. But Strabo and other historians who speak of the great fertility in spices of the Sabæan country, and of the enormous wealth thus resulting, help us to abate our wonder. Perhaps a kind of royal ambition of matching her host, if not in wisdom and regal splendor, at least in the lavish outpouring of her wealth, may have borne some relation to her munificence. The gold alone is estimated at nearly four millions of our money; other estimates put it at a much higher value still. The 13th verse, however, makes us aware that these gifts were not without some

return. The custom of the times arranged such a balancing of attentions, and even allowed the giver to intimate very distinctly what form of return would best please her. Accordingly, we read that "King Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty," or "according to the hand of King Solomon," as the Hebrew says. Perhaps, then, if his "hand" had already been free in its own gifts, and if she were afterward frank enough in asking, the exchange may not have been very unequal.

We have already alluded to the difficulty of settling the locality of Ophir mentioned in v. 11.

Scarcely more settled is the question of the kind of wood which is here called almug, and sometimes algum. It was, as here appears, as well adapted to the making of musical instruments as of pillars or balusters or "stairs." (See 2 Chron. 9:11.) Sandal-wood, for which many have contended, seems to meet none of these conditions. In 2 Chron. 2:8, algum trees are associated with cedar trees and fir trees as growing on Mount Lebanon. Cypress-wood or some other of that texture seems best to suit all the facts thus known to us.

The "psalteries" with which the singers accompanied their voices were smaller than "harps," and are thought to have resembled not a little our guitar. Josephus credits Solomon's temple-choir with a number of them to us incredible—forty thousand.

Now, if our association of the narrative of the Ophir voyages with the matter of our lesson be correct, the whole recital serves in the narrator's mind one most obvious purpose—of exalting the royal magnificence of Solomon, and especially the wisdom out of which it grew.

The queen, accordingly, stands forth as the most notable witness to these things. Yet it is natural for every Christian reader to hope that God may have added to her visit a blessing which she was not wise enough at first to seek. This hope finds some encouragement in Scripture. One suggestion of good for her comes out of that verse of the seventy-second Psalm already referred to. It is said of David's future Son, the Messiah, "The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts." There is enough in the structure of that psalm to encourage the belief that in it, as in other predictions of Christ, a kind of prophetical perspective looked through near things to things remote. If so, the queen of Sheba offering her "gifts" to Solomon, "the king's son," would be a fitter type of the homage which future kings were to give to Christ if she had learned to offer her tribute with some true recognition of "Jehovah," by whom was established the throne both of Solomon and of Christ.

The reverent mention of Jehovah's name and goodness made by the queen in v. 9 encourages this view; for, although some such words might have been uttered under the heathen conception of local deities, it is certain that larger views of Jehovah than could consist with such notions must have been given her by the discourses of Solomon, whose testimony upon that gravest subject she was prepared to receive with the deepest respect. Add to this the kind of mention which Christ makes of her: "The queen of the south shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon." These words, indeed, do not say that in that hour of judgment she herself will be accepted, yet the relation in which she stands in our Lord's discourse to the heathen men of Nineveh, who "repented," and the

tone of commendation in which she is named, leave us free to hope that her careful effort for the hearing of wisdom might have made her wise.

Still, since in this direction nothing distinct is taught us, we must look for the chief meaning of this narrative in some lesson that is plainer; and it seems to be this: The power of God's blessing to make itself known and to command attention.

Whatever else in Solomon's character was insincere or wrong, he had sincerely asked of God kingly wisdom; and God, pleased with the prayer, had promised to answer it with all that it besought of him, and more. This story of the impression made on the distant queen of Sheba by the fame of Solomon, and of the profounder impression received in her visit, is proof of God's faithfulness to his engagements. It was not David's son, but David's God blessing David's son, that spread the name of Solomon so wide over the ancient lands and prepared for it a fame which to this day is unapproachable through all the East. Then let us remember that if an endowment of wisdom equal to Solomon's is not to be expected by common men, God has for the humblest of us gifts infinitely better than kingly wisdom. It is no heathen queen with perfumes that waste and "gold that perisheth" who will attest our blessedness if we be made by the Holy Ghost "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." But our "profiting shall appear unto all men," and God shall show to all eternity "the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness to us through Christ Jesus."

Accordingly, a very striking suggestion is made in all this story of the final emptiness of all wisdom, even though miraculous in its source and degree, that allows itself to terminate on temporal things. With the world,

indeed, it passes as the most enviable of all endowments. The last thing that most men wish to be called is "fool;" the most welcome flattery is that which endows us with genius. It is not only in statesmanship that a "crime" is thought to be more pardonable than a "blunder." Yet let the mere genius and wisdom which men most applaud and envy be tested by its ability to bless its possessor, and what a deceiver it is! It persuades a man to walk with the gait of a king, all eyes admiring him, all heads doing him reverence. Does it save him from temptation? Ask Solomon and Bacon and Byron. Does it give him peace? Read Ecclesiastes, which the Spirit of inspiration has caused to be written apparently to answer this very question. Does it ward off death? Does it defend in the judgment? Next after those appeals which Satan and wicked men offer to mere appetite, the most effectual lure to destruction thrown out before the young is the lust of being thought to be knowing. It forbids simplicity and obedience, the true charm of childhood and generous youth. It forbids the fear of moral danger and prompts the exploration of every perilous coast. It forbids the fear of God, and makes contempt of things held sacred a sign of wisdom and strength. It nurses pride and self-will, to the abrogation of every rule and restraint of justice and law. The tempter keeps telling his victims, "Ye are as gods, knowing good and evil. Talent is king. You know what you want, and how to get it. Be your own law." And the dupes obey. Was there ever on earth a more pitiable fool than the wise Solomon in those later days in which he made his God-given wisdom do magnificent service to his idolatry and lust? There are in our land tens of thousands of men whose "smartness" is following, to the best of their ability, his mad example. Multitudes of them are caught while

young in Satan's web, and perish there like flies. Not a few are shrewd enough to keep for years out of the meshes which they carefully thread. But unscrupulous wisdom cannot outwit God, who "taketh the wise in their own craftiness." "How are they cast down into destruction as in a moment!" Out of human applauses and stately funerals into what desolate surprises do those men go who are not "wise toward God"!

Let us remember Solomon's own best counsel: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and remember the prayer of Solomon's father: "Lead me in thy truth and teach me, for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day;" and let us remember, above all, the warning of their "greater Son: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18: 3).

Yet the most pointed lesson of all this story we have had recited to us already by the lips of Christ himself. How shameful and criminal is contempt of his wisdom when contrasted with this laborious and costly effort to witness the wisdom of a man! "A greater than Solomon is here." Neither he nor his wisdom is far to seek. And he asks not our gifts, but loads us with his. Whoever will sit at his feet and "learn of him," whoever will open his heart to his "joy unspeakable and full of glory," will be more willing than Solomon's guest to say, "Behold, the half was not told me." Especially when he shall show us his palace and his banqueting-house and his servants that stand before him, we shall be sure that "the half was not told us."

And none of his guests turn back again from his heavenly country to their own. The glory that he has, he gives. When the merest children, who, having learned

of him, have died in the faith, shall meet him in the day of his coming, all the magnificence we have now been thinking of shall pale before that scene; and it shall be truer of them than even of the lilies, that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

The queen of Sheba in Solomon's palace had not a thousandth part of the privileges which Christ brings into our churches, our Sabbath-schools and our homes. Let us, by grace, see to it that she do not "rise up in the judgment to condemn us."

SOLOMON'S SIN.

BY THE REV. HOWARD CROSBY, D. D.

Nov. 16.—1 Kings 11: 4-13.

SOLOMON had come to the throne of the most important kingdom then on the earth at the youthful age of twenty. Nursed in luxury, possessed of absolute power and courted by the surrounding nations, he very naturally exhibited the glaring practical contradiction of building the magnificent temple of Jehovah and corrupting the land with the abominations of heathenism. If in the earlier years of his reign some remembrance of his father David's piety restrained him and gave him a desire for a righteous administration, these aspirations seem to have been entirely smothered as he advanced in years and monarchical splendor. Proud of his sublime eminence and flattered by the obsequious attentions of foreign nations, he formed matrimonial alliances with the royal families of them all until a harem of seven hundred wives disgraced the Holy City. These heathen wives required their heathen chapels and chaplains, and the complaisant king surrounded Jerusalem with temples for the enactment of pagan idolatries. Chemosh and Molech even, the gods of Moab and Amnon, whose names are identified with the horrors of human sacrifices, were honored with fanes in the very face of the temple of Jehovah. What a vast contrast there was between Israel now

and the Israel of Joshua's day four hundred years before! (See Josh. 24 : 31.) Could it be possible that this city, where incense was going up from a thousand altars to as many idols, where the lascivious songs and wanton processions which marked a degraded paganism formed daily a part of the ceremonies of religion, where the intrigues of ambition and licentiousness perverted justice and destroyed the liberties of the people,—could it be possible that this city was the holy city of that gracious Jehovah who had brought Israel under Moses out from the Egyptian bondage, and had guided his chosen people under Joshua into the possession of the land of milk and honey? Where was the high priest? Where was the memory of God's grace? Where was the holy law which God had given Israel by the hand of Moses? Before the temporal power and prestige of the pampered Solomon all monitors are dumb, all remembrances are extinguished. The grand temple of Jehovah stands over Jerusalem. Its courts witness the regular ceremonial of the Mosaic service, with the additions that Solomon had made to enhance its splendor; but all this ceremonial is nullified by the equal honors of the heathen rites to which the royal court pays homage. The high priest and priests of Jehovah are but officials of the court on a par with the priests of Ashtoreth. There is a universal toleration of all religions, however false, and of all the vice that accompanies them, but in the dazzling brilliancy of the throne and the display of boundless wealth the fearful fall from the old patriarchal purity is unnoticed, and the nation plunges headlong toward its ruin.

To the king, prematurely old, at length comes the prophetic voice declaring the wrath of Jehovah upon the apostate kingdom, the doom, however, softened in two particulars for the sake of David, who, though long

dead, still benefited the land by the effects of his piety. The rending of the kingdom from the Solomonian line should not take place till Solomon himself had passed away, and then a remnant (Judah) should remain with the regular succession.

From this glittering but mournful story of Solomon let us learn the lessons of life that his career illustrates.

I. *A life of luxury is perilous to the soul.* God intended man to labor even when he was in Paradise. The idler is practically opposing a fundamental law of the Most High. An abundance of wealth tempts a man to a life of pleasure, which is selfish idleness, and when official power is added to the wealth the flood-gates of sin are opened in the soul in almost all cases. David's is one of the few, probably the only one, where an absolute monarch has reigned forty years and yet but one departure from uprightness could be charged against him. A daily occupation employs the mind and preserves it from the wanton wanderings which idleness promotes, while one who is free from the necessity of such occupation seeks simply to be amused, and the ways of sin at once invite the natural passions of the soul where the amusement can be furnished. He who, if busy in an honest trade or profession, would readily throw off the approaches of gross sin by his preoccupation, will, as an idler, dwell in thought upon the sins that solicit him, and devise some plan by which conscience can be circumvented and the form of a righteous plea for self-indulgence can be framed. The barriers of a father's counsel and example, which ought to be all-powerful, are thus broken down and carnal desire is made the guide of life. David's experience and teachings are of no value to a Solomon sitting on an absolute

throne with a harem of seven hundred wives. The son, giving loose rein to his carnal will, finds it easy to refer his father's piety to the force of ignorance, weakness and timidity, while he himself appears as the representative of progress and enlightenment, which are the names given to transgression and folly.

Solomon was a luxurious idler. He had a native tact or wisdom which God gave him for high ends, and which doubtless he used, so far as the secular government of the land was concerned, in the earlier years of his reign; but he learned to abuse even this exalted gift by making his foreign alliances and fostering his fleshly indulgences. He was not a statesman busying himself for the good of his country. Such a man could not give himself up to luxury, for the man of luxury is necessarily an idler. The young man who has independent resources is in a very hazardous position. He is tempted to play the Solomon on his own small scale. The sin, however, is just as great, and the ruin as profound. He seeks associates who will amuse him, and, instead of growing in spiritual wisdom and strength, he descends rapidly to the plane of stupid carnality.

For, II. *The way of wickedness is a steep descent.* Solomon found the step from Pharaoh's daughter to Pharaoh's god a very easy one. Youth flatters itself with an idea of its own strength, and plans a descent into sin only a short distance, when it will return and walk in the path of righteousness. It is the silly bird caught in the fowler's net. Association with evil blunts the perception of the evil, and the young man is soon found apologizing for the wickedness he formerly condemned. Solomon had as easy a conscience when he built Molech's temple as when he built the temple of

Jehovah, for his evil heart had invented excuses proportionate to the occasion. The young man educated in a Christian family by persistently associating with godless companions and making his own amusement the end of life keeps an easy conscience when he breaks the Sabbath and indulges in sneers at religion. He has built up a theory of philosophic liberalism which protects him from the rebukes of conscience which he once felt. It is this fact which makes his course downward so rapid. He soon reaches that fearful depth (of which God's word warns us) where he calls good evil, and evil good. The rebellion against God is here complete, against which the sentence goes forth from the throne of infinite justice.

III. *The wrath of God is a dread reality.* Men of loose life love to harp on the truth that God is love, and then interpret love as amiable weakness. They lose sight of the fact that there is such a thing as the "wrath of the Lamb"—that the very Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world is a power described as a lion in other scriptures. It was the divine anger with Solomon and his corrupted people which rent Israel asunder and raised up formidable foes to destroy the prosperity of the land. Our text is perfectly plain on that head.

And is the divine anger confined to this world and to national life? Is not the character of God always the same, and does he not meet sin in every form with the fearful frown of his perfect righteousness? Is the divine love to be pleaded as a barrier against the divine holiness? We are taught very plainly in the word of God that there is only one solution of this question of man's escape from the divine wrath against sin. It is a solution which preserves the divine holiness and justice, while it enables the divine love to save the sinner. It is the solution of a

divine Substitute, in whom, by a faith which unites us to him for ever, we suffer with him that we may reign with him. If this solution be spurned by the proud heart, there is nothing left to it but a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation. This whole side of revealed truth is ignored, or, if mentioned, is hated and reviled by some who call themselves Christians, and yet pervert the whole meaning of Christ's atoning work, while they nurse their pride and cling to their sins with the deceitful hope that all will be well. It is of those who count the blood of the covenant an unholy (or a common) thing that the Scripture says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." He who is not in the blood-covenant with God is still in his sins, and must meet the unimpeded anger of his holiness. Nature, on which these false Christians rely, cannot save—nature can only augment sin. Nature is corrupt, and from a corrupt fountain you will have only a corrupt stream. Solomon followed nature and abandoned God; the two things were one. And God's anger is all that is found at the end of that road.

IV. It is in full accordance with what has been said that *the source of the false life is in the false heart*. Solomon's heart (we read) was not perfect with the Lord God. The word "perfect" here is not to be understood as referring to the character, but to the motive and intent. A perfect character never existed on earth since man fell, except the Lord Jesus. The perfect heart of David (who was a man after God's own heart) was not a heart free from sin, but a heart honestly devoted to the Lord and seeking the divine grace and guidance—a heart in which the Holy Spirit therefore dwelt. Worldly and wicked men love to sneer at David and exclaim at his pious

psalms as the utterances of hypocrisy. Why? Because an honest Bible describes the sad sin of a humble, godly man. If David's career had been one of vice like Solomon's or like Napoleon's, they might rightly doubt his piety; but (as we have already said) a career of forty years of absolute power with only one stain on it proclaims a life of remarkable saintliness, and gives David the clear right to be the sweet Psalmist for the Church of God of all ages. David's heart was a "perfect" heart; that is, it was as a whole given to God. It made the truth of God its principal aim. It did not treat religion as a side duty or as a formal penance for special occasions. David loved God, and loved his holy law. His happy song was, "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust;" "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower;" "Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!" Such a singer was no hypocrite. He sang from the depths of a holy experience, and when he fell into a grievous sin, his whole soul was bowed in contrition and rent with a grief which was like the pains of hell. Hypocrites are not so horrified at their own sin. An ordinary man, like any one of David's critics, would have treated David's sin, if it had been his own, as a mere trifling escapade, and have found a thousand ready apologies for it. Not so that man of God. He found no peace to his agonized soul until in deep abasement he acknowledged his sin and confessed his transgression unto the Lord. There, when the Holy Spirit made his presence known to him again, he found his first comfort. Is this the way of hypocrites? Yes; in the very face of David's grievous sin we declare that

David had a *perfect* heart. But Solomon's heart was *not perfect*. The pen of inspiration contrasts the two. Solomon's religion was a political and fashionable affair. A heart devoted to God had nothing to do with it. He would pay outward respect to the religion of the land, but with the grand liberality of a worldly heart he would be so broad in his views and so free in his charity as to welcome all religions into his realm and capital. This broad religion, on last analysis, is just no religion, but a device to escape from the restraints of any true religion. It is the religion that is represented by the current literature of the day. The air is full of its cant. It is simply the heart that is not perfect with God pursuing its course of nature. It is the heart that can indulge in sin to any extent, and yet speak eloquently on universal love and the excellent glory of humanity in general. The so-called philosophy of the day is brimful of it, destroying the idea of the personality of God in order that it may make room for a universal righteousness, sin being eliminated as an old wife's fable. It is the religion that is lauded on the stage by depraved men and women, because it finds no fault with their defilement. This is the Solomonian religion, which is set over against the Davidic religion in our text.

Which will you accept? You cannot have both. They are mutually exclusive. Which do you prefer? The glitter is all with the Solomonian sort. It is gay and lively and fashionable. If you choose it, young man, you will have a smooth time in one way. You will be patted by many an approving hand as a real good fellow, the right sort of a man, as "none of your straight-laced hypocrites," and you will find the easy practices of false and licentious company in full harmony with your religion. You will also have a good word from the newspapers if you are in

political life, and the cordial endorsement of those eminent theologians who guide public opinion in the daily press. Now, if you choose the Davidic religion I cannot promise you these sweet encouragements of the broad-minded public. In this regard, I will tell you plainly, you will meet with no sympathy from the influential heads either of fashion or literature. You will be classed with the ignoramuses or the bigoted, and promotion will not run after you. But I will tell you also whose full sympathy you *will* have, and whose approbation will be to you a boon ineffably rich. You will have the sympathy of your God and Saviour and the full approval of your own conscience. The foundations of peace will be laid in your heart in spite of the cold world around you, and you will find the true happiness which grows up from within and is not obtained from without. You will find in the companionship of God (for "our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ") the constant source of unspeakable blessings and the preparation for a home in glory. The Solomonian religion does not lead to that home.

Again I ask you, young man, which will you accept, the Solomonian or the Davidic religion? Read carefully the chapter where our text occurs, and in the light of that divine record decide. It is a decision for eternity.

THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

BY THE REV. CHARLES CUTHBERT HALL.

Nov. 23.—Prov. 1:1-16.

By the ancient Hebrew arrangement, the Old Testament was constituted in three parts, called the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa or Sacred Writings. The Law consisted of the five books called the Pentateuch; the Prophets, of the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings (these being the "former prophets"), after which came "the latter prophets," subdivided as the "the greater" and "the minor." The greater prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel; the minor prophets are the twelve named in our canon from Hosea to Malachi. The Hagiographa, or Sacred Writings, included all the books not previously named—Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles. The Hagiographa were subdivided as—1st, the devotional and didactic books, Psalms, Proverbs and Job; 2d, the five rolls, Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther; 3d, the historical books, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles.

By this outline view we discover the place of the book of Proverbs in the Old-Testament canon. It is classed as one of the didactic books under the general division of Hagiographa. It consists of several moral discourses breathing a lofty spirit of ethical earnestness,

and followed by a vast collection of apothegms or concise, pithy sayings regarding a great variety of subjects. The name of Solomon, the illustrious son of David, is repeatedly used in the book, and after prolonged examination of all sources of historical information the general opinion of biblical students is that there is no good reason to doubt that the wise and wealthy king was very largely the author of these maxims. The last two chapters of the book are of course not the compositions of Solomon. Agur and King Lemuel, two otherwise unknown persons, are named in connection with these chapters. Agur is called the son of Jakeh, and the discourse is said to have been delivered to Ithiel and Ucal; and of King Lemuel it is alleged that he learned from his mother his apothegms and the acrostic which follows them. As for those parts of the book attributed to Solomon, it is not probable they come to us in the original form. The first verse of the twenty-fifth chapter says: "These are also proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out." Solomon lived about one thousand years before Christ; Hezekiah, who lived two hundred and fifty years later, doubtless commissioned the students in his college to edit the Proverbs of Solomon, together with other kindred maxims, oral or written, which, arising from other sources, were at that time a part of the current thought.

The book of Proverbs, therefore, as we possess it, is a canonical book (its canonicity has been admitted throughout the Christian Church) compiled from the apothegmatic sayings of Solomon, Agur, Lemuel and other authors more ancient perhaps than Solomon, and constituting a most lofty and helpful volume for ethical study. That the learned son of David is to be reckoned as the main author appears from the statement made

in 1 Kings 4:29-34, where his undoubted power and versatility in this direction are stated: "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart even as the sand that is on the seashore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East country and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men: than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman and Chalcol, and Darda the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom." It is interesting in this connection to refer to the apocryphal book so long known as "The Wisdom of Solomon." The fact that it was so long attributed to him is an indirect evidence of his vast influence as a man of learning. The internal proofs show that this book not only lacks those signs of inspiration which could have established its canonicity, but that it was written by a Greek, centuries later than Solomon.

In opening the book of Proverbs the mind of the Bible-student turns with intense curiosity toward this far-off thinker who in times and under conditions so remote from our own has produced maxims which at the present day inspire the moral nature by their inherent and noble trust and purity. The personality, the accomplishments, the erudition, the profound and discerning analysis of the forces which play upon and guide both human passions and human principle,—all these characteristics of Solomon constitute him an object of singular interest. And

for the purpose of assisting the mind of the reader to conceive more vividly the reality of this ancient and royal teacher of ethics, I insert here a few sentences from the valuable little book called *Life-Lessons from the Book of Proverbs*, by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Perry, bishop of Iowa. The picture doubtless contains fanciful elements, yet its interest and value appear in the added vitality it gives to our conception of this far-off forerunner of that "greater than Solomon" who has come at last to be for all of us "the Way and the Truth and the Life." Bishop Perry says: "We can picture him at his work in the cool shadows of his study, where, amidst the spreading pomegranates and from under the clambering roses of Sharon of the inner court, light latticework admitted the softened sunlight and invited the fragrant gales from over the hills which stood about Jerusalem. Rolls of parchment or papyrus are scattered against the cedar wainscoting or lie carelessly thrown upon the tessellated floor. There were the Psalms of David, the royal singer of Israel. There were the books of Moses, the man of God. There were the chronicles of Israel from that starting-point of human progress when, at the call of Jehovah, Abraham left his childhood home for the service of God, down to the record of the last crowning glories of his own career. There too, ranged beside him, were the words of the wise whence he drew that vast encyclopædic knowledge which had already made for the wisdom of Solomon a world-wide fame. Here were the songs, numbering upward of a thousand, which he had written. Here were the records of those wise decisions given from the lion-guarded throne of ivory and gold. Here too were the three thousand proverbs, original or selected, the monarch had himself committed to the parchments and arranged for future use. Treatises on natural science, minute descriptions

of plants, from the stately cedar of Lebanon to the ‘hysop that springeth out of the wall,’ and descriptions also ‘of beasts and of fowls, and of creeping things and of fishes,’ were here at hand. Reclining on his couch, with waiting slaves to bring him rolls for reference, and those who held the pens of ready writers to take down the words of wisdom falling from his lips, we may almost see the royal author as he uttered the dark sayings and striking apothegms, wiser than the words of ‘Ethan the Ezrahite and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol.’ From this home of luxury went forth those mighty words which, inspired as they were of God, have become the heritage of youth and age alike for all time. They speak to the young man and the maiden, and they forget not the old man and child. By them kings may reign and princes decree justice. They are words fitly spoken, and acceptable words, words of truth and soberness. Divine sentences are they from the life of the king.”

With regard to the subjects treated in this remarkable book a word should be spoken. Many efforts have been made, and made successfully, to divide the book into sections and in a general manner to classify the topics in their order. But so large a part of the book is given up to detached maxims, collated apparently without reference to a grouping of cognate subjects, that the writer of the present article has found no topical arrangement of the book of Proverbs more satisfactory than that adopted by Bishop Perry (if another reference to him may be allowed), who has in his *Life-Lessons* gathered out of all parts of the book maxims bearing on each given subject, and grouped them severally for purposes of study in a general way. The result is the following suggestive table of subjects: The Words of the Wise, or Proverbs of Experience; Treasure in the House, or Proverbs of Home-

Life; Closer than a Brother, or Proverbs of Friendship; The Reward of the Diligent, or Proverbs of Industry; The Suicide of the Soul, or Proverbs of Purity; The Principal Thing, or Proverbs of Wisdom; The Struggle with the Strong, or Proverbs of Counsel; The False Balance, or Proverbs of Trade; Wine a Mocker, or Proverbs of Temperance; The Issues of Life, or Proverbs of Restraint; The Better Choice, or Proverbs of Integrity; The Shining Path, or Proverbs of Holiness; The Exaltation and Reproach of a Nation, or Proverbs of Politics.

After this general review of the authorship and contents of this very wonderful and inspiring book—by which review, it is hoped, the Scripture-student will be led to seek a closer acquaintance with its contents—let the time yet remaining to us be spent in the effort to realize the grand and solemn contrast in which, it may be said, we find the primal, underlying purpose of this book. This contrast has the very sharpness of absolute light and absolute darkness; it is the contrast between good and evil as the choice in the moral life—between choosing God as the end and object of existence, and choosing sin, which reacts in every way to the dishonor of God and to the detriment and ruin of the sinner. Not more forcibly, we think, can this enormous contrast be shown than by referring to two sentences, one taken from the portion appointed as the lesson for this day, the other selected from a more advanced portion of the book. The first is that magnificent declaration made in the seventh verse of the first chapter: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge”—words which embody in massive compactness the volume of truth connected with all that moves upward and Godward in man and in the uni-

verse. Nor can we forbear to say that the words with which the Westminster Shorter Catechism opens seem to thrill with the same soaring devotion, the same eagle-like purpose to know Him whom to know is life eternal: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever." Over against this declaration of that in which all goodness, all bliss, all true knowledge consists, we find in the thirty-sixth verse of the eighth chapter words which discover to us the essentially ruinous character of evil.

Let us for a moment ponder this word of warning which is uttered so variously and so often in these Proverbs—the truth that sin is a blight upon the soul, be that sin what it may in the relations of business or of social life or of solitude. He that sinneth works upon his soul in its relations to God a deep and deadly wrong. He throws his soul into collision with the vast moral law of the divine Mind. God's law must triumph ultimately; behind it is the momentum of Deity. In it is all the resistlessness of perfect justice, perfect righteousness; and while if any soul will put itself by obedience in harmony with that law it shall be taken up and borne along by it, and admitted to the reconciled presence of the Great Lawgiver, if any soul will set itself against that moral law sooner or later the march of law must go on and the soul that stood against it must go down.

This is the stern teaching of the book of Proverbs, and as we look upon the book through the lens of the Christian revelation, we see a meaning yet more overwhelming in these words: "Wrangeth his own soul." He that sinneth causes his soul to assume a position of antagonism, not against impersonal law alone, but against the personal Christ, the Son of God. One fact can never be removed: Christ loves you. If your life be crooked and

misshapen as selfishness, ill-temper and pride can make it, if your days are as barren of anything like responsive affection as the desert sandhills are void of verdure, still he loves you with a love full of long-suffering, full of the mighty sacrificial grace of Calvary. Though you flee to the uttermost parts of the earth and hide yourself, you cannot get away from his love. In the mean time, by persisting in sin, by holding yourself back from the right, by gratifying evil desire in any form, what are you compelling your soul to do? To take its place among them that hate and revile him, to reward his patience with indignity, his love with coldness, his mercy with crookedness of spirit and ungracious antagonism. Is this not a fearful wrong to perpetrate upon your soul?

But this truthful and searching book will reveal in many ways to those who study it faithfully not only these divine relationships which sin breaks up, but the personal reaction of evil-doing upon the powers of life, its tendency to cripple working-power, to paralyze the resisting energy, and at last to plunge in one hopeless and incalculable wreck the shattered remnants of misused gifts, which, rightly used, would indeed bring forth in our lives, by renewing grace, the image of God wherein we were created.

So I would urge upon all who may come within the influence of these lines a deeper acquaintance with the book of Proverbs. It is, to the Christian man, a spiritual tonic. Read in its true relation to those later Scriptures with which we are blessed, it will be, if accompanied with fervent prayer for the Holy Spirit's counsel, a great invigorator of the religious life, clearing and sharpening our perceptions of right and wrong, and feeding that divinely-kindled longing to maintain, in all the complex relations of our earthly lives, "a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men."

TRUE WISDOM.

BY THE REV. THOMAS H. ROBINSON, D. D.

Nov. 30.—Prov. 8:1-17.

AN eloquent and splendid piece of writing is this eighth chapter of Proverbs. It is not surprising that nearly all the ancient and most of the modern expositors of it have found here, in Wisdom, not an attribute but a real person, and on comparing the chapter with the opening of the first chapter of the Gospel by John have concluded that Wisdom here and the Word there are one and the same divine and eternal Being, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is likely that every one who hears the words of our Golden Text at once refers them to the God incarnate. It must be he who speaks so earnestly and lovingly to all mankind. And so, doubtless, it is when we come to the final and deepest meaning of the words. All good things run back at length to their divine Fountain. All right thoughts, holy influences and noble purposes are of heavenly birth. It is not necessary, therefore, to discuss the question whether the "Word" in John and "Wisdom" in Solomon are one and the same, each of them the divine Saviour and Friend of man. It is enough to know that when our hearts have embraced this highest Wisdom, we shall find that Christ, the living and the eternal Word, is within us, the life of our souls. Nor is it at all necessary, in order that we may find Christ everywhere in the Old Testament and the New, to hear his

voice and recognize his personal presence everywhere. His messengers and his messages represent him.

Let us find, therefore, in this chapter what is clearly, on the very face of it, a bold and striking personification of the attribute of Wisdom as it exists in the Deity. It is the infinite Wisdom in God that here speaks as a person, as a woman—a queenly woman, we may say. She presides in the divine counsels and operations. She comes forth out of all darkness into the broad light, loving not concealment and secret places. She comes into the public resorts and frequented places of men with her divine messages and invitations. She addresses all classes of men, that she may utter in all ears the sacred lessons of holy truth. She declares that her instructions are worth more than silver or gold or precious stones; that she has highest things at her disposal; that she will fill the granaries of men with richest fruit and their coffers with greatest wealth; that kings and princes rule wisely and righteously only by her counsel; that she loves them that seek her, and will reward their seeking by revealing herself to them; that by her aid the magnificent structures of heaven and earth were formed; that in the beginning, before the earth was founded, when there were no depths and fountains of water, no mountains or hills, ere the heavens were first arched and the clouds were stationed in them, then she, Wisdom, was with God and near him; she was his delight, rejoicing before him; and then also, in that beginning of creations, she was looking forward with expectancy and joy to the last and best work of God's hand, the world of mankind; and now at length she comes into all paths of men and exhorts them to listen to her, because all who earnestly seek her shall obtain favor and blessing from God, and all who reject her shall wrong their own souls.

Let us arrange our thoughts in the following order:

- I. What Wisdom is in God and in man;
- II. What Wisdom gives;
- III. To whom Wisdom calls.

I. What Wisdom is in God and in Man.—Wisdom in all intelligent beings is the choice of the nobler ends, and of the best means of accomplishing them. Wisdom in God is the manifestation of himself in the glory of his infinite riches of being and character through and to and for the good of his whole creation. It is the very height of goodness and wisdom in God to reveal himself, to make creation unceasingly bright with his presence, to make day speak unto day and night to night in showing forth knowledge of him. It is wisdom in God to cause every sun he has lighted up in heaven, nor less every flower he has painted on earth, to utter to his children some message of their Maker. The heavens and the earth and Nature through all her courses are occupied in their highest mission when they are busy making their glad and solemn announcements of the presence and power and glory of God. “Of him and through him and unto him are all things; to whom be glory for ever.” He is the end of all things. What were the universe of angels, men and things, and a God unknown, a God that for ever hideth himself, a God without oracles or priesthood or worshipers, a Deity with no “comings forth,” an everlasting Father who gives no audience to his children?

It is wisdom in men *to know God*. Infinitely greater is the Creator than all his creations, and infinitely more to us than they all. “In him we live and move and have our being.” To know him is to know the perfect object of knowledge. To know him is to have eternal life, the

highest hope of the soul. To know him is to know the cause and reason of all things—to have that knowledge that explains all mysteries, that enlarges and purifies the intellect, that satisfies the heart, that renders us perfectly and for ever blessed. To know God in the last and highest revelation of himself is to know him in Jesus Christ, God incarnate, God redeeming, and so to know the only way of salvation—to know how to be justified, sanctified, glorified.

To know God is to know something of his intentions and doings, and to come into friendly relations and communion with the High and Holy One who inhabiteth the praises of eternity.

We are walking in the highest places of human understanding, in the upper regions of knowledge, when through his works or in his word and by his Spirit we are becoming acquainted with God. It should be the height of our ambition. Expectancy should end here in knowing God and our relations with him. It is religion in its central element. It includes the profoundest reverence for Him who created us, the most genuine repentance for our sins against him, a supreme desire to know and to do his will, a reception of God in Christ as our Saviour, and a submission and dedication of our whole selves to him as our Lord.

Wisdom in man receives various names in Scripture. It is “the fear of the Lord,” “a new heart,” an “incorruptible seed.” It is “light in the Lord,” the “wisdom that cometh down from above.” It is to “know Christ.” It is the “new life” in us, transforming our nature and setting us on an upward movement toward God and perfection. It is the answer of mind and heart and will in man to that wisdom in God “which hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ.”

II. *What Wisdom Gives.*—God is the most liberal of givers, as man is the most needy of creatures. When this highest Wisdom comes to the ignorance and want of man, she brings everything that human poverty needs. She cries aloud and bespeaks the ear of man: “Hear, for I will speak of excellent things, and the opening of my lips shall be right things. For my mouth shall speak truth, and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.” Wisdom speaks in Nature, in the written word and by the living Word, Jesus Christ, and everywhere her utterances relate to things of highest excellence. She speaks of God—of his existence and character, of his works and ways, of his providences and government; of the history of redemption, of the birth and life, the death and the resurrection, of the God-man; of the soul of man, of sin and recovery, of free grace and the cross, of the everlasting life and the heaven of the saved.

Plain, solemn and sorrowful things does Wisdom utter of the guilt and depravity of man, of the folly and unbelief of sinners, of the shortness of life, the sure and near approach of eternity, the terrors of the Lord and the solemnities of the judgment-day.

Wisdom changes her voice. She pleads and warns. She unfolds the love of God; she uncovers the anger of God. She brings out of her storehouse of infinite resources facts about God and man, high reasonings, sublime arguments, tender entreaties, fearful warnings. She utters “right things,” or, as Professor Stuart translates it, “The opening of my lips shall be uprightness—*i.e.* without any duplicity, in honest sincerity.” There is no guile, no evasion, no deception in Wisdom’s words. Plain and clear are spiritual truths and duties to him who listens to the divine teaching with a guileless heart. The divine Wisdom utters only truths; truth is her native

language; "Wickedness is an abomination to her lips." What terseness and beauty have the goodness, the truth, the purity and the righteousness of all that comes from the lips of God! "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them." Man deceives; his words and ways are twisted and tortuous. In the sharpest intellect of the sinner there are horrible distortions. Light is put for darkness, and darkness for light. He calls evil good, and good evil. He reasons one way and acts another. He knows the better, but chooses the worse. In the utterances of divine Wisdom there is nothing crooked, and "he who is spiritual discerneth" all her teachings. The converted sinner is filled with a profound astonishment at the plainness and simplicity of divine doctrines. To all who like children sit at the feet of Wisdom all is true "and right" and good. They "are taught of God." They have an unction from the Holy One and "know all things."

Wisdom compares her instruction with silver and gold and rubies, and pronounces it to be immeasurably superior to them all. "All things that can be desired are not to be compared" with her gifts. Perishable are they all, and without Wisdom to guide in the use of them they are a curse to their possessor, dragging his soul earthward and cheating him of a heavenly birth.

Wisdom claims that she inspires the human intellect, gives power to mind, gives skill, invention, genius, gives birth to all arts and sciences. Man is only a discoverer, not a creator. He is an imitator, not an inventor. His art is the imitation of Wisdom's doings, his skill is in copying divine lessons, and his science in discovering what the manifold wisdom of God has done. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." Every wise-hearted man is one

"in whose heart the Lord hath put wisdom." There is a "theology" in human inventions, a theology in art, in science, in all the skill and power of created beings. Intellect does nothing grand and good that may not be traced back to the divine Worker. The splendid intellects of the world become darkness and foolishness when they will not let the light of the eternal Word shine into them, and Satan is the insanest fool in the universe, because he seeks to walk in the light of his own kindling. When this divine Wisdom is given the control of our faculties, she turns our feet from the broad way of death; she brings us "out of darkness into marvelous light;" she plants in our hearts that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, and secures our happiness for ever.

Behold from what she turns the man who welcomes her counsel!—from "pride and arrogancy, and the evil way and the froward mouth." She inspires the hatred of all evil. She sets the currents of the soul toward goodness, the feet toward God, and shapes the conduct unto Christly obedience.

Still further does Wisdom lengthen the precious catalogue of her gifts: "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom. I am understanding; I have strength." "Counsel," the highest and wisest counsel, that will guide our wayward feet into the paths of peace. What need they more than "counsel" whose hearts are bound up in foolishness and whose lives are fearful blunders? Solomon has said that "in counsel is stability." Not in all counsel, for what kingdoms have been rent and broken by the Ahithophels of evil counsel! How many feet have been turned from the path of life by the counselors who have come between anxious souls and Christ! It is good counsel Wisdom gives. Lord Bacon has said, "The greatest trust between man and man is the trust of giv-

ing counsel; for in other confidences men commit the parts of life, their lands, their goods, their children, their credit, some particular affair; but to such as they make their counselors they commit the whole." Divine Wisdom becomes the counselor of needy, ignorant men. "Is not this the name whereby he shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God?" "I am understanding; I have strength;" "Wisdom and might are his;" "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally;" "To him that hath no might he increaseth strength." For him who takes counsel from God there is an assured result—right conclusions, stable foundation, an understanding of the truth, clearness in all the paths of duty, mental, moral and spiritual, to do and to suffer all the will of God. There is no break in God's plan. There is nothing missing in his system.

III. *To whom Wisdom Calls.*—"Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man." It is a universal call. She speaks to everybody—to high and low, to all classes of men. Her counsels are suited to all mankind, to men of all ranks, diversities and characters. She is no "respecter of persons." All alike need. To all alike she offers the richest gifts of spiritual light and life and holiness that mortal can receive and God bestow.

With all the earnestness of Deity, Wisdom seeks to reach all men and press upon them her incomparable favors. She is represented as haunting all parts, entering all the places where men do most congregate, that with urgent, importunate and persuasive voice she may plead with them. "She standeth in the tops of high places by the way, in the places of the paths." She would be seen and heard. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming at the doors.

The eternal Wisdom is not silent. She hides not from men. Her "delights are with the sons of men." "Doth not Wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?" Yes, verily, everywhere—at the rallying-places of men, at all their assemblies, in all their paths, at their gates and doors—with pitying heart she seizes her opportunities to utter lessons of God, and entreat men to leave their paths of impenitence and folly and enter her highway of holiness and truth. Everywhere and to everybody God is speaking. Men are not suffered to go on their paths of evil and of death unwarned and unbesought. The pulpits of Christendom, the leaves of the written word and the testifying lips and lives of all true believers are a part of the voice of God. Nature, for him, declares his eternal power and Godhead, so that men are without excuse. Wisdom speaks in the vanity of mortal things, in the certainties of death, in the woes of sin, in the whispers of conscience, in the retributions of human law, and in the conscious rewards of a pure heart and a virtuous life. From millions of pulpits does she preach. God leaves not himself without witness. Everywhere and to everybody eternal Wisdom cries, pleading against sin, pleading for holiness. No man goes unwarned.

But there are some to whom Wisdom gives gracious assurances of a tender and special regard: "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." From none does she hide herself. "I love them that love me," be they princes or beggars. Her doors to the marriage-feast are open for those who are in the highways and the hedges, if they can be compelled to come in.

But "they that seek me early." Is there not here a gracious word for children and youth? Who dares to doubt that this highest Wisdom can impart to "little ones" her lessons? There are things that neither God

nor man expects from children and youth—that they be statesmen, leaders in the professions, guides in science, teachers of art, rulers in civil life. But wisdom, the fear of the Lord, religion, cannot be likened to these. It adapts itself to all classes and ages. It is for human nature from the dawn of intelligence in man. Its highest truths are simple; its noblest duties are childlike. Over the gateway of this kingdom is written, “Except ye become as little children ye cannot enter.”

Multiply as we may the difficulties of drawing children and youth to the love and practice of Wisdom’s lessons; say of them, They are thoughtless, trifling, fond of amusement, averse to the seriousness of religion; yet their very weakness and immaturity, their pliability and teachableness, their freedom from fixed habits and vicious ways and from conscious hatred of God, are a grand encouragement to lay hold of their nature, believing that they may early be led to bow to the claims of God.

Nor is it any matter of mere theory that they may, but of fact that they can, know and love and serve God. In every realm of created things and beings it is the young and tender thing that is taken to be trained and educated at will. It is the young plant that is cultivated into beauty and fruitfulness; the young animal whose savageness is overcome by the gentleness and skill of early training; the young child of the brutal and immoral, of the degraded heathen and savage, that by Christian training is drawn completely away from ancestral habits and inspired with the love of goodness and truth. “Early” bring God’s blessed lessons of wisdom and love to children and youth. Tenderly and earnestly say to them, “God is your Father, Christ is your Friend. You may love God, trust Christ, walk in the way of life, be Christians.” “They that seek me early shall find me.”

DRUNKENNESS.

BY THE REV. ERSKINE N. WHITE, D. D.

Dec. 7.—Prov. 23:29-35.

HERE, in Solomon's great picture-gallery, we have a very vivid portrait. Drawn in the palace of an Oriental king nearly three thousand years ago, it portrays with startling accuracy the man whom we met but yesterday upon the street of our village or town in this Western republic. Ask any one of our boys in the Sabbath-school to-day, "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes?" and he will answer, "The drunkard."

As this is an object-lesson, smother for a minute your disgust and notice the characteristic details. First come the reprisals of nature. Translating literally, we have, "To whom is *ah?* to whom *alas?*?" and we hear the sighs and groans that follow upon arousing from the debauch; then we witness the senseless quarrels and brutal violence of the inebriate, alternating with wanton speech and silly, meaningless laughter; then the bruised and livid countenance disfigured by blows and falls; and, finally, we are pointed to the scarred visage and the bloodshot eye, the revolting insignia of the confirmed drunkard.

With this picture before us, let us consider, first, *The Warning*; second, *The One Warned*; third, *The Admonition*.

I. *The Warning*.—This we find in the graphic sketch of the drunkard's fate. He is represented as deceived and poisoned: "The wine is red; it giveth his color in the cup, it moveth itself aright." There is no apparent danger. The sparkling wine promises only gladness and mirth; it is pleasant to the taste and easily swallowed. The words "it moveth itself aright," or, as they may be translated, "*it glideth smoothly*," almost prepare us for the figure of the next verse: "it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." The fatal appetite is as little noticed as the snake gliding silently through the grass, as little feared as the lustrous serpent by the victim it has charmed. No man as he dallies with the wily tempter believes that at last he will receive his death-wound from its poisoned fangs. "Others have perished," he answers, "but I am in no danger." Even when his companions see that the fatal blow has been received and that the poison is doing its work, he does not feel the pain. "They have stricken me, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not; when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." With senses confused and mind weakened, "he beholds strange things;" his lips refuse to obey him, and "utter perverse things." He becomes as indifferent to consequences as the man who falls asleep upon the swinging mast of the storm-tossed ship.

Thus by vivid picture does the wise teacher symbolize the unspeakable evil and degradation of drunkenness. As the lesson is of the personal effects of this vice, I do not propose to repeat the familiar facts that show the extent and magnitude of the curse as a whole. I shall not cite the returns that tell of the wasted wealth, the lost power, the decimated population and the innumerable crimes that are the direct result of drunkenness in

the country at large; nor shall I array the ghastly statistics of impoverished families, ruined lives, orphaned children, heartbroken women, raving maniacs and dis-honored graves that connect themselves with the thought of a half million of confirmed drunkards in the United States alone. Enough for the present to look where our Scripture points and remember the absolute ruin of the individual sinner. With the thought before us of the trembling hand, the tottering step, the imbruted taste, the sodden brain, the distorted moral sense, the hopeless stupidity and utter recklessness that tell of a bright, hopeful, promising youth transformed as by infernal magic into a useless, loathsome, premature old age, we have a warning most earnest and startling.

But evil and danger are not all that the picture reveals. It is one of a series of portraits of gross, persistent sinners. No one becomes a drunkard against his will. Every act of intemperance is a fearful sin against God, and to speak lightly or jestingly of the least approach to such wrong-doing is a mockery of his holy law. The drunkard, like every other sinner, is to be pitied, but he is not to be excused as simply "a poor victim." Ordinarily, he sins under the clearest light, against the plainest warnings, and persists in sin until it becomes dear as his life-blood. He is none the less sinful because at last his appetite becomes a disease, his will-power is paralyzed and resistance is impossible.

The end is destruction. "At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder;" and the adder's sting is *death*. Every hope in this life is destroyed, and there is no hope in the life to come. God's word is as plain as it is terrible: "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, . . . nor *drunkards* shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6: 10).

II. *The One Warned.*—Having portrayed the character and the fate of the drunkard, it might be expected that the wise teacher would call upon him to arouse himself and escape from his deadly peril. We listen for some such cry as that of the apostle: “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead!” But not so: he is not addressing drunkards. Doubtless, it was as plain in that day as it is now that such appeals are wellnigh useless. Very rarely are the fangs of the serpent loosed. With few exceptions the confirmed drunkard is hopelessly lost. The grace of God is indeed illimitable, and here and there we meet with instances where, under the divine power, the impossible has become the possible, and a drunkard brought to Christ has found in him strength to break the chains of his deadly sin; but this is the only hope, and of this how few avail themselves! With senses drugged with the poison that mingles with their blood, they are deaf even to the Saviour’s voice. Thus the warning is not addressed to them. It is to the young man still unspoiled by evil association that Solomon speaks: “Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way; be not among winebibbers.” The evil must be met before it has made its attack, and the young must be so taught that even before the temptation comes they may realize the danger that lurks in the wine-cup, and may hold drunkenness in holy abhorrence as a deadly sin against God.

That such instruction cannot begin too early is abundantly evident.

(1.) This temptation besets youth at a very early age, and it commences in its most insidious form. The evil is belittled by being presented under a fair disguise, while its horrors are pointed out in the distance as belonging to something far different. Young men little think that

those bold and swaggering companions who excite their ardor with stories of merry drinking-parties, midnight adventures and gay carouses, and who seem as heroes in their hearers' youthful eyes, are at one end of the path along which, at the farther end, staggers toward the precipice the foul, besotted drunkard at whose presence they shudder. Habits are formed far earlier in life than we are wont to think. My eyes to-day fill with tears as I think of some of the companions of my college days whose career, promising so brilliantly, ended in early manhood in misery and death; and yet it was evident to all who knew them that with scarcely an exception the evil habits that proved their ruin were formed in early boyhood, before ever they were exposed to the temptations of college-life.

2. Appetites and habits formed in early youth are by far the most tenacious and destructive. Few men become drunkards who do not form the drinking habit while immature. While the body is growing and developing it is not only easily trained in physical exercises, but it is also readily warped and distorted; not only does it rapidly assimilate food, but it quickly accustoms itself to the use of drugs, narcotics and poisons. It adapts itself to the conditions imposed with wonderful facility, and may develop so abnormally as to be dependent for strength, and even life, upon sustenance and stimulants fatal to the healthy animal frame. Parallel to this is the fact that moral influences exert more power upon the young. Sensitive as the steel to the magnet, they respond almost instantly to the forces that bear upon them, and the impressions received in early youth are the last to fade away in old age.

3. If not warned in youth against the dangers of intemperance, such admonitions are little likely to reach

them until too late. We have all noticed that when once the habit of excessive drinking is formed it is ordinarily too late to sound the warning ; and yet until that point is reached those who are no longer under the direction of parents and teachers are very unlikely to be halted with the challenge, " Whither are you going ?" and even less likely to listen patiently to words that they think in no wise concern them.

4. In youth the heart responds more readily to the whispers of the Holy Spirit, and the only certain defence against immorality is loyalty to Jesus Christ. Every fleshly lust becomes hateful when the Saviour becomes precious. We may warn against vice, but we can have no certainty that our warning will avail unless the heart is transformed.

III. *The Admonition.*—What is the counsel of our lesson? To avoid drunkenness? No one needs such warning. Even those most in danger will tell you that such excess is to be shunned. What, then? Not to "tarry long at the wine"? Not to "seek mixed wines"? Many would say that such caution is all that is needed. Not so our Scripture. Listen!—" *Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.*" If this means anything, it means "Total Abstinence;" and that such is the teaching we should give our children to-day is, to my mind, beyond a doubt. We are not considering this question abstractly. In order that I may teach young men that total abstinence is their duty, it is not necessary that I should prove that "moderate drinking" is, *per se*, always and everywhere a sin; or that I should assert that there are two kinds of wine of which the Bible speaks; or that I should insist that the wine into which our Lord trans-

formed the water at Cana was absolutely without a trace of alcohol ; or that I should denounce good men and true who are fighting the common enemy with other weapons ; or that I should deny that temperance (as defined by the good men who would substitute it for total abstinence) might not be enough *if universally practiced*.

The question is severely practical : What is my duty to-day, in this country, in view of the unquestionable facts that connect themselves with the vice of intemperance ? Thus looking at this question, I present "*Total Abstinence*" to young men as their duty.

I. That they may make emphatic protest against the most gigantic of the evils that threaten our land. Here the facts to be faced are familiar to us. Among them are the waste of the material resources of the country ; the undue burdens thrown upon the sober and industrious ; the sufferings of the weak and dependent ; the responsibility for two-thirds of the poverty and vagrancy that demand relief, and for more than half the crime that fills our prisons and feeds the gallows ; the consequent increase of taxation ; and, above all, the constant growth of the "*rum-power*," which already rules in many of our large cities,* which boasts that it controls the legislation of States, and is now even threatening to take possession of the government of the Union. In view of such facts is it not the duty of Christian men, entirely aside from the question of personal danger or personal influence, to protest against an evil so portentous ? Whether such protest can be made under the very indefinite banner of "moderate drinking" let each judge for himself. But this is not all, for—

* In the city of New York (1883) more than half of the "aldermen" are liquor-dealers, and the number of places where liquor is sold exceeds the united number of places where food of all kinds is to be obtained.

2. *The conditions under which we live involve special personal dangers in the experiment of moderate drinking.* Could it be proved that pure wine, such as is commended in the Scriptures, can be safely drunken, that such wine never poisons the system, tempts to excess nor arouses an insatiable appetite, it would have little or nothing to do with the question of the safety of moderate drinking to-day. Such is not the liquor of the United States in the nineteenth century. Could it be proved, moreover, that a single glass of wine at the dinner-table each day has only a beneficial effect, it would have as little to do with the question. Without hesitation I say: Given the ordinary fiery wines with which society is tempted, the alcoholized beers and the drugged and adulterated liquors of all kinds; given, moreover, the pernicious drinking-customs and meaningless fashions of indiscriminate "treating" which prevail almost as a national institution among the larger number of so-called moderate drinkers,—and it is folly, almost beyond expression, to deny that to the great majority of our young men "moderate drinking" means terrible personal danger. In the words of Canon Farrar: "Oh, do not let any of us be so proud as to think that we should be safe. If men of the highest genius have fallen under this temptation, if even an Addison, a Burns, a Hartley Coleridge and hundreds of others have been tempted by the excess of their intellectual work to rekindle the vestal flame upon the altar of Genius by the unhallowed fires of alcohol, I, for one, will not be the man to abstain from saying to any one, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth—however superior he may think himself to the same possibility of temptation—still let him beware lest he fall.'" *

3. Whatever may be our decision in regard to the

* *Talks on Temperance*, p. 110.

duty of open protest or in regard to our personal danger, we cannot escape responsibility for the acts of others who are influenced by our example. Paul did not think it wrong in itself for him to eat meat or to drink wine, and yet how emphatically he teaches, "It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak"! . . . "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Upon this ground it seems to me that the argument for total abstinence in our land and under present circumstances is unanswerable. The majority around us are weak, and if they drink moderately are in vital peril. As against those who would make their consciences the measure of mine, I may properly insist, as did Paul, upon my right to Christian liberty in things not in themselves unlawful; moreover, in regard to acts which, though capable of being carried to excess, are in themselves beneficial, I may further insist upon *using* my Christian liberty; but in regard to an indulgence which to the man in health is a mere luxury, and in this climate and under the existing circumstances doubtless an injury, is it not a very solemn duty for me to forego my Christian liberty (if such I still consider it) in deference to a high Christian consideration for the weak ones by whom I am surrounded? When a Christian man attempts to defend the habitual moderate use of intoxicating liquors, he must necessarily guard his statements by reservations that will never be appreciated by those who make his defence and example an excuse for their sin. He may discriminate between fermented and distilled liquors; he may specify wine containing only an innocent percentage of alcohol; he may limit the partaking to the one glass at the dinner-table; he may except from this liberty all who have inher-

ited or acquired an abnormal appetite ; and, thus defining "moderate drinking," he may persuade himself that his precept and example will do no harm ; but despite all his refinements of discrimination it will still remain true that to nine-tenths of those who quote his authority "moderate drinking" will mean that, short of actual drunkenness, each man may drink *what* he pleases, *when* he pleases and *where* he pleases.

O ye who are questioning as to your duty in this matter, remember that countless thousands have been deluded by "moderate drinking" into the jaws of death ; that "moderate drinking" is the plea of every pander to the vice of intemperance ; that even the drunkard described in our Scripture answers that his "drinking" is only "moderate." If you are yourself above all danger, have compassion upon those around you for whom your Master died, and as you are strong bear the infirmities of the weak.

And, after all, who shall say who is the *strong* or who is the *weak*? He who as a youth was given of God "a wise and understanding heart," and who yet in old age says, "I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine," is the same Preacher who utters the earnest warning : "*Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder.*"

THE VANITY OF WORLDLY PLEASURE.

BY THE REV. CHARLES L. THOMPSON, D.D.

Dec. 14.—Eccles. 2 : 1-13.

THE record of this lesson is part of Solomon's endeavor to find happiness outside of or apart from religion. That experiment has often been made. Men insist on buying their experience at the highest price; they will not accept it as an inheritance; they refuse to learn it from any teacher. Yet this experiment is made and put on record as if for the purpose of saving us the long journey of a bitter trial. Whatever may have been the motive of "the king in Jerusalem" in making these experiments, the object in recording them is not doubtful. They are lights of warning hung out in the darkness to keep us from personally going over that road which ends in sorrow and vanity.

The value of a warning depends largely on him who gives it. When an old sea-captain marks down a dangerous channel along a stormy coast, it behooves those who see the chart to avoid the channel. King Solomon's counsel is worth heeding. These are not the words of a theorist. They are not based on philosophy, but on experience. They are also the words of a man who was in a position to make the experiment thorough and exhaustive. The elevation of the throne gave him unhindered scope. He lacked nothing in resources, determination or wisdom to make his trial grand enough and conclusive

enough for all time. When, at the end of it, he writes "Vanity of vanities" over all the dark path, it may well be accepted, and we who follow may substitute an ample testimony for a bitter experience. Let us analyze that testimony and seek its lessons.

The first chapter records Solomon's experiment at finding happiness along the path of wisdom. It was a noble pursuit. If supreme good could be found in the creature, he would find it there. He conducted the search with great thoroughness. "He communed with his heart." He pushed the search through to the end of wisdom, even to the point where the crumbling path breaks off into "madness" and "folly." He studied alike the positive and negative poles. He sought by a knowledge of contraries to take in the whole range of his subject. And yet the experiment was a failure. He reached the bitter conclusion so often reached since then by the jaded man, and thus announced by Faust:

"I feel it; I have heaped upon my brain
The gathered treasures of man's thought in vain;
The tree of knowledge is not that of life."

Literature is full of that wail. When Henry Martyn had grasped the highest honors of science, he exclaimed at the moment of success, "I have grasped a shadow." Sir Humphry Davy was one of the most amiable and useful of all scientists. He was successful in his pursuit of wisdom. But in one of the late entries in his journal is this: "Very miserable." And he writes, "I envy no quality of mind or intellect in others—not genius, power, wit or fancy. But if I could choose that which would be most delightful—and I believe most useful to me—I should prefer a firm religious belief to every

other blessing." Sir Humphry Davy is not alone among modern scholars in joining Solomon in profoundest assent when he says, "In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

The second chapter, the subject of the lesson, opens with his second experiment. It is this: *Pleasure without wisdom*. The record of this is in the first two verses. He now resolves to abandon the "studious cloisters." For their quiet he will substitute the excitement of feverish pleasure. But this tremendous reaction from the higher joys of the philosopher to coarser animal pleasure is not easy. He has to goad his mind before it is ready for this new and low direction. He has to say to his heart, "Go to now; I will prove thee with mirth." What a fall is here, from the contemplation of high themes of truth, the works of God and man, to merely sensual pleasure! No wonder he who erst had keenly relished the former seems to enter reluctantly on the latter. But the experiment is brief. It would be. For a man of wisdom could not be long in discovering the utter worthlessness of sensual gratification; sharp and swift comes the conclusion: "I said of laughter, It is mad, and of mirth, What doeth it?"

It has sometimes been the question of thoughtful people how the wise man could bring himself to try this second experiment, the effort to find happiness in "the lust of the flesh" and "the lust of the eye." This, it is usually thought, is the delight of fools. But that a man who could say he "had seen the works that are done under the sun," whose philosophy had ranged over new things until they were seen to be the old things recurrent, who could truly say that he had "gotten more wisdom than all they that had been before him in Jerusalem,"—for such an one to fly from philosophy to pleasure, from

meditation to mirth, is accounted phenomenally strange. But it is not. Across just such extremes does the restless spirit fly that has not yet learned that happiness is not the creature of circumstance, but the outgrowth of the life. And how it magnifies this inner character of happiness to reflect that even wisdom pursued for its own sake may be seen to be so hollow that the soul will fly to the farthest distance from it, inferring that even sensual folly may be a relief from the emptiness of knowledge!

Solomon has now gone through two stages of his experience. He has tried the extremes. What he sought was not to be found in "divine philosophy;" it was not to be found in sensual pleasure. But perhaps if these extremes can be blended there will be a happy result. He will mingle pleasure with wisdom and see what will be the product of the combination. This, then, is the third experiment. It is given in the third verse: "I sought in my heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting my heart with wisdom." He had tried wine and those things for which it stands. He had tried wisdom alone. He would now let them mutually moderate and complement each other, and, as in nature gases that are singly destructive become healthful and life-giving in their union, so the finer and the grosser pursuits may mingle to produce a new and higher happiness. He has indeed made some progress, for he has learned that brutal pleasure satiates and brings on its own intense disgust, and that wisdom palls or eludes; that to be an eremite is not to be satisfied; that even high intellectual aims in and for themselves are a mirage, and bring on the experience of Goldsmith's Traveler, who was

"Impelled with steps unceasing to pursue
Some fleeting good that mocks me with the view,

That, like the circle bounding earth and skies,
Allures from far, yet, as I follow, flies."

He has made some progress when over each of these roads he has written "Vanity." It remains for him now to discover the futility of trying to combine things empty in themselves and mutually destructive when brought together. He said, as many others have said, he would be a refined literary devotee of pleasure; he would varnish his pleasures with good taste and good manners; he would hide the bacchanal features under the veil of æsthetic conventionalities; he would rein in the steeds of passion, and control, and so dignify, the lower appetites by the firm hand of reason. He would be moderate in his enjoyments. The wine-cup should not carry him off the poise of his manly judgment and convictions. He would hold his entire nature in that noble equipoise in which each should minister to the strength and repose of the other. The pleasures of the body would give zest to following pursuits of the mind, and the higher pleasures of knowledge would somewhat, by their alliance, dignify the fleeting enjoyments of sense.

His philosophy at this point seems to have been an anticipation of similar combinations attempted at the present time by those thinkers who plead for a development of the "superb animal" along similar lines—those who ignore the moral and spiritual nature, and claim that the perfect man is one whose passions are regulated by reason, and all whose affections, lower and higher, are held in the balance of a resolute will.

But the alliance of wisdom and folly is like the attempt to unite day and night; and "the wise man" would not be slow to discover it. If wisdom without folly had been a failure, so much the more when wisdom was enfeebled

and diverted by folly. The history of literature powerfully points to Solomon's conclusion. With the idea advanced by Burke, that "Vice loses half its evil by losing all its grossness," a multitude have striven to rescue passion from its shame by flinging over it the lustre of intellect, and study from its weariness by lighting for it the lamps of revelry. So with Voltaire, the brilliancy of whose wit was darkened by the fumes of his sensuality; and Byron, the splendors of whose genius cannot rescue his memory from contempt; and Rousseau, that "self-torturing sophist," who, though he knew

"How to make madness beautiful, and cast
O'er erring deeds and thoughts a heavenly hue,"

could not throw enough of enchantment over passion to hide the ghastly wreck he had made.

Nor is this failure to find satisfaction in the attempted union of knowledge and pleasure without manifest reason. Wisdom and sense are alike exacting. Thus the pleasures of sense are open to the full only to him who suffers no restraints of reflection or conscience to interpose their barriers across the rushing stream of passion. And, on the other hand, he who would win wisdom must hold the lower nature in unyielding check. A bad life makes a bad knowledge. "Faults in the life breed errors in the brain." Folly in the heart vitiates clear perceptions in the head. Bacon observes profoundly that "the eye of the human intellect is not dry, but receives a suffusion from the will and from the affections." Therefore, if dark and evil affections float up into the intellectual eye, all clearness of vision is gone. Thus reason joins a world-wide experience in saying Solomon's third experiment in seeking happiness by the alliance of wisdom and folly must be a swift and disastrous failure.

But Solomon was a man of almost unbounded resources. He is therefore in condition to make one more experiment. It is that of *riches united with wisdom*. Wisdom alone had failed him; pleasure also was empty; their union was equally futile. He turns now alike from the intellectual and sensual to seek for satisfaction along the road of worldly magnificence and power. The record of this endeavor extends from the fourth verse to the eleventh. What a panorama of splendor those verses suggest! The palaces and public works, identified by some antiquarians with the remains of art found among the ruins of the countries over which he ruled, were magnificent beyond description. The queen of Sheba declared the half had not been told her. His gardens, vineyards and orchards, with fountains playing among them, were the fitting setting for the structures of marble and gold. The court plate and jewels gathered from "the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces," the bursts of music on every hand from all sorts of musical instruments, the songs of trained singers and the retinue of servants and officers, not only to anticipate every want, but to give the impression of boundless wealth and strength, made up such a picture of magnificence as perhaps has had no parallel in the history of kingdoms.

But we shall mistake if we think of this as a scene of Oriental luxury and idleness, for through it all Solomon "acquainted his heart with wisdom," and his joy was not that of an effeminate idler, but of an enterprising, laborious man. Let us correct the common impression that his was an experiment of the mere enjoyment of wealth. It was not merely turning the streams of wealth in upon self; it was using them under the direction of practical wisdom and a public spirit for the glory and strength of his kingdom. It was an ambition similar to that of Louis Napo-

leon when with consummate art he labored for the industrial prosperity of France. Wise, industrious and practical Solomon would find refuge from the bitterness of other failures in planning for himself and his people the most splendid products of wealth. Perhaps he felt he must get out of himself. "Without diversion there is no joy," said Pascal. "The king in Jerusalem," jaded by pleasures and disappointed in learning, would become a man of affairs, and in the great enterprises for which wealth gave him such ample scope he would find perhaps the substantial good he had elsewhere sought in vain. Behold the devotee of wisdom and pleasure at the altar of Mammon. And his wisdom at least will help him push this experiment through to its legitimate results. For it probably was reasonably true then, as it is absolutely true now, that though a man without brains might get money by some accident or other, he stood no chance at all for managing and keeping it. The practical sagacity which could look wisely to the control of "the works that his hands had wrought" is not the least of the reasons for calling Solomon "the wise man."

And yet he failed. Disappointed and unhappy man, see him wandering amid the grandeur he had created, through gardens whose bloom turned to ashes, among fountains whose waters were "Marah," amid marble halls that seemed to echo only the emptiness of his feverish life, and hear the threnody of his burdened heart: "Behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit."

The result of Solomon's fourth experiment should come forcibly to an age bent on material gains. Perhaps beyond any other time this age follows Solomon in the purpose to gather into the hands of the sagacious and dominant few the labors and accumulations of the many. More and more wealth is concentrated. The strong and

active brain gets the large results. "I will make me large works" is the motto of the time. So there is a tendency to great corporations and syndicates operated by a few, perhaps at last by one energetic and powerful mind. And once more it is the union of brains and riches. The men who dominate our commerce, our railroads, our large establishments of every kind, are far enough often from being "wise men" in the higher sense of that word, but they are men who, like Solomon, manifest laborious and comprehensive mental traits, men who gather wealth, not for luxury, but for power, and who in the pursuit of it evince splendid intellectual capacity. And when they have gained their point the world sees, if they do not, that it is vanity and vexation of spirit. The men who have builded great works are frequently those whose vexation of spirit has been apparent in their social and public life. "The deceitfulness of riches" remains a truth all the more vividly illustrated by those who in these days have been most brilliantly successful in gathering them.

And the plain and open lessons which the race for riches now or in any age amply enforces are those evident ones whose commonplaceness is the proof of their everlasting truth. This world is not big enough to fill a human soul. Mammon cannot give peace. The din of business cannot hush the inner voice. There is no joy so profound as that of self-denial. Bacon says: "To so small a purpose is it to have an erected face toward heaven and a perpetual groveling spirit upon earth, eating dust as doth the serpent."

Closing this lesson, the king makes a comparison between wisdom and folly, declaring that the former excelleth the latter as light excelleth darkness. But even that is only comparative. It is infinitely better to pursue

the ends we seek with a thoughtful mind than to plunge after them blindly and with folly. But he goes on to tell us that failure awaits him who makes this world and its happiness his pursuit, whether he do it wisely or foolishly. And all history amplifies and unfolds the splendid and sufficient experiments of Solomon. "What can the man do that cometh after the king?" By these words he would shut us up to accept his experience even as if it were our own. With whatever endowments and opportunities Heaven may have favored us, it were presumption to think we could add anything to the brilliant trial of this world made by the king at Jerusalem. He tried it on all its levels, low and high, and it failed him. Happiness is not to be found by him who seeks it directly. It must come, if at all, by the noble indirection of a higher pursuit. Carlyle says, wisely enough, "The only happiness a brave man ever troubled himself about was happiness enough to get his work done." And a French writer brilliantly and truly says, "The farewell to happiness is the beginning of wisdom and the surest way of finding peace."

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. The king himself draws it at the end of his book: "Fear God and keep his commandments." God is the only worthy portion of the soul, the only secret of happiness. We are apt to put our energy into the world, and reserve God for a refuge when this world is past. But instead of "enjoying the world and using God," we should "use the world and enjoy God." "In him is fullness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore."

"Here would we end our quest:
Alone are found in thee
The life of perfect love,
The rest of immortality."

THE CREATOR REMEMBERED.

BY THE REV. HENRY M. BOOTH, D. D.

Dec. 21.—Eccles. 12 : 1-14.

THE question, “What is the chief end of man?” did not originate with the divines of Westminster. It was an old question, which had frequently been discussed by the wise men of antiquity, when it received their scriptural answer, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.” The pressure of life, the inequalities, the disappointments, the failures, must inevitably lead a thoughtful mind to examine the mysteries of human existence. Man is here upon the earth; he lives, he dies. He becomes somewhat acquainted with his surroundings as he hastens from the cradle to the grave. But who shall tell him whence he has come or whither he is going, or what he should do while he is here? In what does his success consist? Who will venture to introduce the truly successful man?

The book of the Bible which is called Ecclesiastes is a contribution to the discussion of this important question. The writer is a God-fearing man who is well acquainted with the ways of the world. He has visited the schools and the palaces and the exchanges, where wisdom, luxury and wealth are sought, and he has reached the painful conclusion that all is vanity: “For in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth

knowledge increaseth sorrow." At last, led by an irresistible impulse, he has gone to God for instruction, and has found comfort in tracing the divine influence out into the ordinary events of daily life. His convictions, intelligently and firmly held, are announced in the language of a dramatic poem,* which "depicts Solomon as conducting a series of moral experiments, as testing the claims of wisdom, mirth, affairs, wealth, and as finding them all incompetent to satisfy the cravings of his soul, as attaining no rest or peace until he has learned a simple enjoyment of simple pleasures, a patient constancy under heavy trials, a heartfelt devotion to the service of God, and an unwavering faith in that future life whose dark portal men name death." Thus this interesting book contains the wisdom of heaven for the life of earth. It is a complete discussion. The teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount are only a development of these truths, and the perfect life of the Son of man is the expression of the results which are here recorded: "Fear God and keep his commandments."

We have no need, therefore, to resurvey the road which this inspired writer has sketched out. We may advance rapidly to his terminus, where we may take advantage of the work which he has performed for us. He assures us that we shall do what is right and that we shall meet with success if we humbly recognize God in early life and spend our years in holy service. What can we discover in this assurance? In what direction does it point? What duties and what hopes are suggested by it?

I. An early recognition of God will become the formative principle of character. The formation of character is the true business of life. Character is the individual,

* *The Quest of the Chief Good*, p. 18, by Samuel Cox.

the man himself. No one can be greater than his character, and no one can be less. The only true, abiding estimate of man, the estimate which God forms, the estimate which an impartial history accepts, is character. All else is but the covering, the silk, the tinsel, the pearls, which men leave to children and friends when they go out into another world. A man may have these things and yet he may live and die a mere cipher. His personality may be nothing better than the wire skeleton which supports the beautiful fabrics of a tradesman's window.

The verdict in favor of character which is given by a wise and righteous judgment should control our endeavors. If we are persuaded that the attainment of character is the principal work of life, we should consider what is necessary to that attainment, and then we should devote ourselves with constant, untiring industry to the essential work. We may fail in every other particular, but in this we must not fail. Carlyle pays a grand tribute to the character of his father, who was a godly stonemason in Scotland, when he writes: * "The force that had been lent my father he honorably expended in manful well-doing. A portion of this planet bears beneficent traces of his strong hand and strong head. Nothing that he undertook to do but he did it faithfully and like a true man. I shall always look on the houses he built with a certain proud interest. They stand firm and sound to the heart all over his little district." Such a character we instinctively admire. Its rugged honesty attracts us. It exhibits an energy which proceeds from the fear of God.

At the centre of character there is always a governing principle. This may be one thing or another—may be a remembrance of God or a regard for the devil, may be a holy resolution or a weak sentiment. Still, it is there,

* Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, p. 5.

and it is influential. It resembles the point of crystallization around which cluster the strange forms and colors of Nature's workmanship. Character will surely be determined by this central principle or supreme choice. When you come to know a man intimately, you become acquainted with his supreme choice, and then you can explain his conduct. For what can you expect of one whose supreme choice is the selfish desire to please himself, or to be as free of care as possible, or to get rid of the annoyances which interest in human distress will bring with it? What will a life yield whose supreme choice is vice? What force can be derived from a nature which is listless and indifferent? What noble service has ever been rendered when the supreme choice has been a preference of the interests which antagonize liberty and religion? And what supreme choice contains such sure words of prophecy as does that which yields to the demand of God, "My son, give me thine heart"? This supreme choice makes God central to every thought and action. The will is surrendered to him. His authority is cheerfully recognized. Character and life and conduct are shaped by his control. We become men of God, and we are never so worthy of ourselves as when we are worthy of his commendation. The man who becomes what God wishes him to become reaches the stature of a perfect man.

To secure this perfection God has given a model and rules and an inspiration—a model to show us what a perfect life is, and rules to teach us what a perfect life should do, and an inspiration to stimulate us to seek a perfect life. Besides, he has removed the many obstacles which sin has thrown in our way as he offers us a complete salvation in the work of Jesus Christ his Son. This offer comes to us with only one condition attached

—penitential faith. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Now to “remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth” is to yield to God as he appears in Jesus Christ, or to become a Christian. This surrender enthrones God at the very centre of character. His word then becomes law. The holy life of his Son, our Redeemer, holds the attention. The teaching which fell from the lips of the Master is cheerfully accepted. The love which was exhibited at the manger and the cross becomes a constraining power. Life discovers a new interest. Old things pass away. Duties which were disregarded are now welcome; virtues and graces which seemed unattainable become personal property. The life within puts forth its strength in buds, blossoms and fruits, which are the “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” of godly living. The formation of character proceeds as we “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” This beautiful and beneficent result is not an accident; it is the uniform experience of obedience. Any one who waits upon God may secure it. Consequently, the personal consecration of a child is a most hopeful event. When a child is led to remember his Creator by making God his supreme choice, the beginning of a perfect character is witnessed—the beginning, not the completion. But just as the acorn which opens in the earth whispers promises of spreading branches and a stout trunk, so does this beginning of a perfect character announce itself. It is a sacred thing. No one should despise it, no one should trifle with it. Many an opening acorn in the forest has been crushed by the foot of man or beast, and the tender oak springing from it has perished in its infancy. It may be so with character.

Christian nurture must always wait upon Christian consecration. The Church must be the nursery where the plants of grace are sheltered and developed and matured until they reach the divine ideal. Consecration and cultivation are universal demands. No life can be complete without them; and with them no life will fail of its completeness. In this particular, as in many others, wisdom and experience confirm the teaching of God's word.

II. Childhood's remembrance of God becomes the perpetual recompense of service. Life means service. "Freely ye have received, freely give," was the command of Jesus when he sent the apostles out to their work. No one can be useful and no one can be happy who is insensible to the appeals for aid which are constantly made.

"That man may last, but never lives,
Who much receives, but nothing gives."

We must bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. He "went about doing good." He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Simple fidelities engaged him. He could not be turned from his purpose by the insensibility of his disciples or the hatred of his enemies. "I am not alone," he said, "because the Father is with me." He "endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." At each step of his progress he was able to refer his work to One who appreciates the motives of actions, and who also knows what actions really mean. An hour of communion with his Father prepared him for any conflict, and he often looked up into his Father's face to gain new inspiration when he was weary or troubled. The possibility of this consciousness is the promise of the Bible. Again and again we are assured that God is inter-

ested in us. He wants to help us. He offers the confidence which Jesus knew.

Now, if we can secure this confidence early in life, we shall be stronger and braver than we could otherwise be, for in every honest service we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that God is pleased. Friends may turn their backs upon us and enemies may persecute us, but we shall not be driven from our purpose. God's "Well done!" will give us courage. "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self; . . . but He that judgeth me is the Lord." Such was Paul's answer to the cheap, flippant criticism of Corinth. He could not be disturbed then, as he could not afterward when he stood alone before Cæsar's judgment-seat: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. . . . Nevertheless, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me." This confidence has always sustained the saints. Abraham knew it, and so did Joseph, and so did Moses, and so did Daniel. Martyrs and confessors have all accomplished their work by faith in God. They have believed in the triumph of righteousness because they have believed in the justice of God. They have toiled with all their might, and have died peacefully. When, as yet, their efforts have only begun to yield results, they have been willing to wait, for they have been waiting upon God.

We may train ourselves to "do all to the glory of God." If we undertake any service, we may perform it as unto him, and not as unto our fellow-men; if we make a contribution of money, we may present it first of all to him, and may then act as his stewards in its distribution; if we contemplate a new work, we may consult him in prayer; if we are burdened with care, we may cast our

care upon him. At once there opens before us many rare privileges. Life with God in it moves safely. There is none of the tossing to and fro with every wind of doctrine which causes men of the world half their distress. For whatever may happen to us, the cause which we love, and for which we are working, is sure to prosper. In place of the easy-going, pleasure-loving, don't-care spirit which drifts into mature years, one may possess this resolute purpose to be and to do just what God may direct. He may put his life into God's hand. He may say, "Here am I, use me." Preparing himself for service, he offers all that he has to God. He is faithful unto death. "God's work cannot be done," says Robertson,* "without a spirit of independence. A man has gone some way in the Christian life when he has learned to say humbly and majestically, 'I dare to be alone.'" But this independence is simply dependence upon God, which, turning away from the applause of men, rejoices in the praise of God.

III. The secure hope of sorrow and of death is obtained when the Creator is remembered. "Hope thou in God" is the Psalmist's exhortation. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost," is the benediction of Paul. God is the God of hope. What a blessed truth that is! He meets us with hope, and he continues to afford hope even to the end of life. When sorrow comes we are not shut up to the conviction that we are the victims of fate. The providence of God, gracious and merciful, surrounds us. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Sorrow has its meaning. There is an "afterward" to every chastisement, with "peaceable fruit of righteous-

* Sermon on *The Loneliness of Christ*.

ness." The end has not been reached. We are still at school. God is dealing with us as with sons. We shall bless him by and by for life's discipline. Meanwhile, he sustains and comforts us to such a degree that a man has even been known to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." We struggle onward through life as the ships fight their way across the Atlantic. There are bright days when the sea is smooth, and dark days when tempests howl. But we are not discouraged. God is with us. We shall surely reach port. We hope in him.

And when we approach death, who but God can afford hope? We are about to depart out of our present life, and what do we know of a future life? We have never been in any other life than that which we now enjoy. No mortal has ever ventured to speak to us from another world. An impressive silence surrounds death. We cannot penetrate it. How much we would give for one brief hour with those who have gone before! But such intercourse is denied us. We can neither see nor hear. We stand upon the shores of time and the waves of eternity roll in about our feet, but they bring us no driftwood. No distant sails can be discovered; continents and islands are not in sight. A shoreless ocean seems to be around us, and our standing-place is little better than a point of rocks in the midst of a waste of waters. Here we are compelled to stand, however, and observe the strange working of an influence which presses friend after friend into the restless sea. What does it mean? Who can tell us? We call it death, this strange influence, but what is death? "If a man die, shall he live again?" Yes, replies the child who has begun to remember his Creator; a man may live for ever. God has given us knowledge of a better life. Once a vessel crossed that sea and brought hither a celestial Being. He remained here for a little while to

teach us that there is another kingdom, into which the righteous enter when they die. The child has no doubt about this. If he calls you to his bedside when he is about to die, he will tell you that he is going to be where Jesus is, and that he is without a fear.

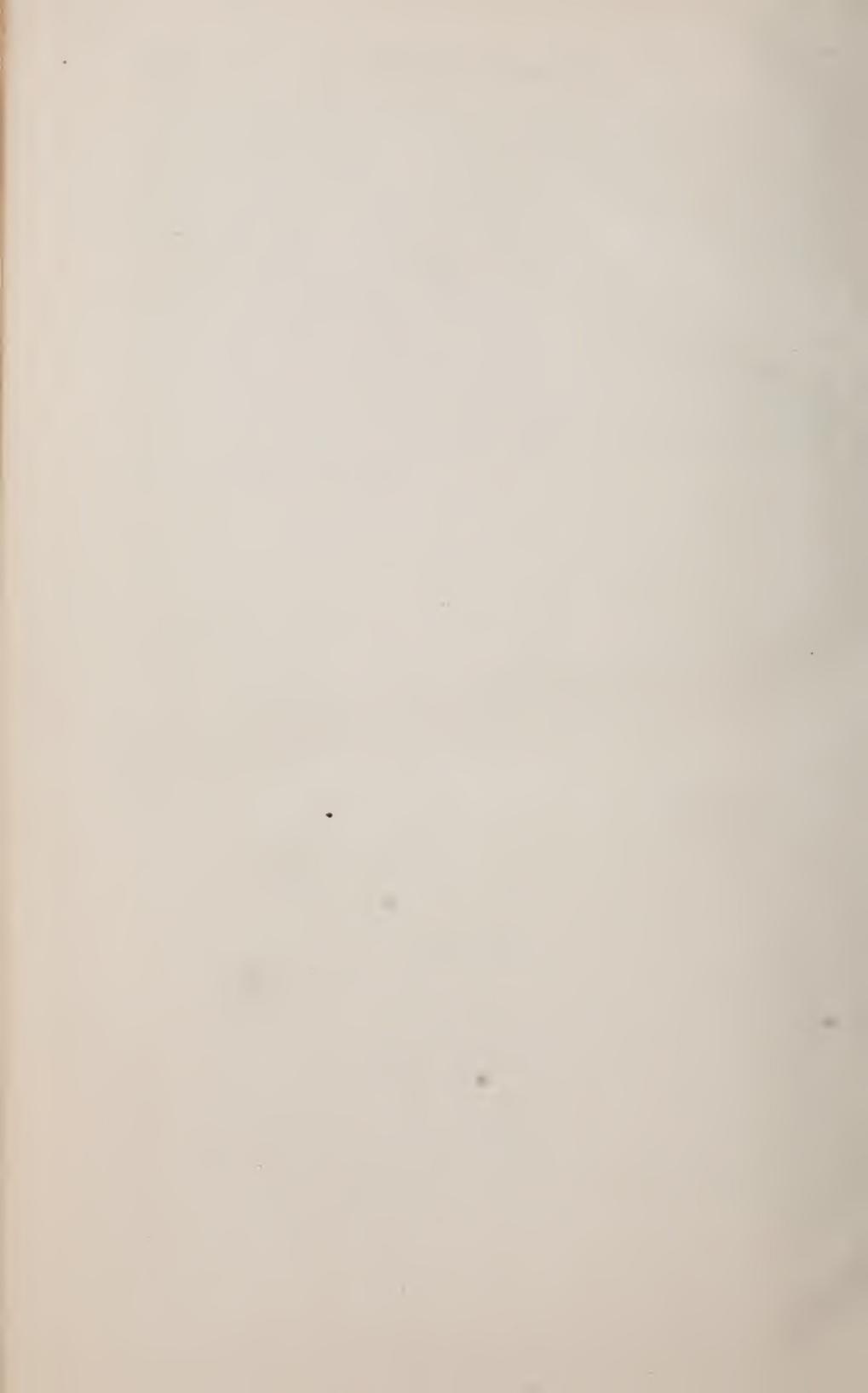
But this is just what the men and women say to whom death comes when life is at its best estate. They too rejoice in the hope which the Redeemer affords, and through faith in him they anticipate a glorious immortality.

And our aged friends also, who are bending with the burden of their scores of years, assure us that they have no desire to give up the hope which they secured so long ago. They are not engaged in making preparations to depart; their preparations were made long ago. They are only waiting. Like delicious fruit which is already ripe, they cling a little longer to the branches, that they may become mellow. Then, in God's time, they will fall into a Saviour's hands, to be carried up to heaven.

Thank God, therefore, if you have been led by the gracious Spirit to "remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." You have solved the problem of destiny; you have discovered the chief good. With a godly character maturing, with the blessing of God upon you all the day, with a hope to meet your sorrow and to remove the gloom of death, go forward! He who has "begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." And if you, my friend, are neglecting your Creator now, and if you have long time been neglecting him, be admonished of your danger. Death may quickly summon you to meet him, or you may be left alone, even while life continues, to realize that "the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Without God you may live, without God you may die, without God you may appear for judgment. Then what?

Ah! there is a better way, tried and approved. Remember thy Creator! Even if "the days of thy youth" are a memory of the distant past, still remember him! Remember thy Creator! Even if many heedless, prayerless years have been numbered, still remember him! Remember thy Creator! Even if the sins of life are like a thick cloud about thee, and thou canst not see how he can forgive, still remember him! And it shall come to pass that He whom thou art remembering will not forget thee in thy times of need, and will bid thee welcome to a place among the saints.

THE END.



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